

Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.  
Form S-3  
April 10, 2006  
Table of Contents

As filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on April 10, 2006

Registration No. 333-

---

**UNITED STATES**  
**SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**

Washington, D.C. 20549

---

**Form S-3**  
**REGISTRATION STATEMENT**

*UNDER*  
*THE SECURITIES ACT OF 1933*

---

**Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.**

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

---

**Delaware**  
(State or other jurisdiction of  
incorporation or organization)

2838 Woodside Street

Dallas, TX 75204

(214) 981-0700

**73-1493906**  
(I.R.S. Employer

Identification No.)

(Address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of registrant's principal executive offices)

---

Robert A. Burk

Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

**Vice President and General Counsel**

**Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.**

**8801 South Avenue, Suite 310**

**Tulsa, OK 74137**

**(918) 492-7272**

(Name, address, including zip code, and telephone number, including area code, of agent for service)

---

*Copies to:*

**Thomas P. Mason**

**Vinson & Elkins L.L.P.**

**2300 First City Tower**

**1001 Fannin**

**Houston, Texas 77002-6760**

**(713) 758-2222**

---

Approximate date of commencement of proposed sale to the public: As soon as practicable after this registration statement becomes effective.

If the only securities being registered on this form are being offered pursuant to dividend or interest reinvestment plans, please check the following box.

If any of the securities registered on this form are being offered on a delayed or continuous basis pursuant to Rule 415 under the Securities Act of 1933, other than securities offered only in connection with dividend or interest reinvestment plans, check the following box.

If this form is filed to register additional securities for an offering pursuant to Rule 462(b) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

If this form is a post-effective amendment filed pursuant to Rule 462(c) under the Securities Act, check the following box and list the Securities Act registration statement number of the earlier effective registration statement for the same offering.

If this form is a registration statement pursuant to General Instruction I.D. or a post-effective amendment thereto that shall become effective upon filing with the Commission pursuant to Rule 462(e) under the Securities Act, check the following box.

If this form is a post-effective amendment to a registration statement filed pursuant to General Instruction I.D. filed to register additional securities or additional classes of securities pursuant to Rule 413(b) under the Securities Act, check the following box.

**CALCULATION OF REGISTRATION FEE**

---

**Title of Each Class of**

**Proposed Maximum  
Aggregate Offering Price (1)**

**Amount of**

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

	Securities to be Registered		Registration Fee
Common units (2)		\$ 1,000,000,000	\$ 107,000

---

- (1) Rule 457(o) permits the registration fee to be calculated on the basis of the maximum offering price of all of the securities listed and, therefore, the table does not specify by each class information as to the amount to be registered or the proposed maximum offer price per security.
- (2) An indeterminate principal amount or number of common units may be issued from time to time at indeterminate prices, with an aggregate offering price not to exceed \$1,000,000,000.

---

**The registrant hereby amends this registration statement on such date or dates as may be necessary to delay its effective date until the registrant shall file a further amendment which specifically states that this registration statement shall thereafter become effective in accordance with section 8(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 or until the registration statement shall become effective on such date as the Commission, acting pursuant to said section 8(a), may determine.**

---

**Table of Contents**

**The information in this prospectus is not complete and may be changed. We may not sell these securities until the registration statement filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission is effective. This prospectus is not an offer to sell these securities and it is not soliciting an offer to buy these securities in any state where the offer or sale is not permitted.**

**SUBJECT TO COMPLETION, DATED APRIL 10, 2006**

PROSPECTUS

**\$1,000,000,000**

**ENERGY TRANSFER PARTNERS, L.P.**

**Common Units**

**Representing Limited Partner Interests**

---

We may from time to time offer and sell up to \$1,000,000,000 in aggregate offering price of common units, representing limited partner interests of Energy Transfer Partners, L.P., described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. We will offer the common units in amounts, at prices and on terms to be determined by market conditions at the time of our offerings. This prospectus describes the general terms of these common units and the general manner in which we will offer the common units. The specific terms of any common units we offer will be included in a supplement to this prospectus. The prospectus supplement will also describe the specific manner in which we will offer the common units.

Investing in our common units involves risks. You should carefully consider the risk factors described under **Risk Factors** beginning on page 2 of this prospectus before you make an investment in our common units.

Our common units are traded on the New York Stock Exchange, or the NYSE, under the symbol **ETP**. The last reported sales price of our common units on the NYSE on April 7, 2006 was \$39.33 per common unit.

**Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.**

---

The date of this prospectus is \_\_\_\_\_, 2006

**Table of Contents**

*You should only rely on the information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement and the documents we have incorporated by reference. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with different information. We are not making an offer of these securities in any state where the offer is not permitted. You should not assume that the information contained in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement and the documents we have incorporated by reference is accurate as of any date other than the date on the front of those documents or that any information we have incorporated by reference is accurate as of any date other than the date of the document incorporated by reference. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects may have changed since these dates. We will disclose any material changes in our affairs in an amendment to this prospectus, a prospectus supplement or a future filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission incorporated by reference in this prospectus.*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<u>About This Prospectus</u>	1
<u>About Energy Transfer Partners</u>	1
<u>Risk Factors</u>	2
<u>Forward-Looking Statements</u>	22
<u>Use of Proceeds</u>	23
<u>Description of Units</u>	24
<u>Cash Distribution Policy</u>	33
<u>Material Tax Considerations</u>	38
<u>Investments in us by Employee Benefit Plans</u>	51
<u>Plan of Distribution</u>	52
<u>Legal Matters</u>	53
<u>Experts</u>	53
<u>Where You Can Find More Information</u>	53

The following is a list of certain acronyms and terms generally used in the energy industry and throughout this document:

/d	per day
Bbls	barrels
Btu	British thermal unit, an energy measurement
Mcf	thousand cubic feet
MMBtu	million British thermal unit
MMcf	million cubic feet
Bcf	Billion cubic feet
NGL	natural gas liquid, such as propane, butane and natural gasoline

**Table of Contents**

**ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS**

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we have filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission using a shelf registration process. Under this shelf registration process, we may sell up to \$1.0 billion in aggregate offering price of common units as described in this prospectus in one or more offerings. This prospectus generally describes Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. and the common units. Each time we sell common units with this prospectus, we will provide you with a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. The prospectus supplement may also add to, update or change information in this prospectus. The information in this prospectus is accurate as of April 10, 2006. Therefore, before you invest in our securities, you should carefully read this prospectus and any prospectus supplement and the additional information described under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information**.

**ABOUT ENERGY TRANSFER PARTNERS**

We are a publicly traded master limited partnership that is primarily engaged in the natural gas midstream and transportation and storage business through our operating subsidiary, La Grange Acquisition, L.P., which we refer to as ETC OLP in this prospectus, and we also have a national retail propane marketing business in the United States through our operating subsidiary, Heritage Operating, L.P., which we refer to as HOLP in this prospectus. As of March 27, 2006, we had an equity market capitalization of approximately \$4.36 billion.

Our midstream, transportation and storage business owns and operates approximately 11,700 miles of natural gas gathering and transportation pipelines, three natural gas processing plants, two of which are currently connected to our gathering systems, fourteen natural gas treating facilities and three natural gas storage facilities. Through ETC OLP, we conduct our natural gas midstream, transportation and storage business through two segments, the midstream segment and the transportation and storage segment. Our midstream segment focuses on the gathering, compression, treating, processing and marketing of natural gas, and our operations are currently concentrated in the Austin Chalk trend of southeast Texas, the Permian Basin of west Texas, the Barnett Shale in north Texas and the Bossier Sands in east Texas. Our transportation and storage segment focuses on the transportation of natural gas between major markets from various natural gas producing areas through connections with other pipeline systems as well as through our Oasis Pipeline, our East Texas pipeline, our recently completed Fort Worth Basin Pipeline, our natural gas pipeline and storage assets that are referred to as the ET Fuel System and our Houston Pipeline System, which are described below.

We are one of the five largest retail propane marketers in the United States, serving more than 700,000 customers from 321 customer service locations in 34 states. Our propane operations extend from coast to coast.

We are a publicly traded Delaware limited partnership originally formed as Heritage Propane Partners, L.P., which we refer to as Heritage in this prospectus, which consummated its initial public offering in June 1996. In January 2004, the propane operations of Heritage were combined with the natural gas midstream and transportation operations of La Grange Acquisition, L.P. conducted under the name Energy Transfer Company. We refer to this combination, along with the incurrence of debt and the issuance of equity securities of Heritage in connection with that combination, as the Energy Transfer Transactions. In March 2004, the combined entity's name was changed to Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.

For the year ended August 31, 2005, we had revenues of approximately \$6.2 billion, operating income of approximately \$312.1 million and net income of approximately \$349.4 million.

**Table of Contents**

**RISK FACTORS**

An investment in our common units involves a high degree of risk. You should carefully consider the following risk factors included below, together with all of the other information included in, or incorporated by reference into, this prospectus in evaluating an investment in our common units. If any of these risks were to occur, our business, financial condition or results of operations could be adversely affected. In that case, the trading price of our common units could decline and you could lose all or part of your investment.

**Risks Inherent in an Investment in Us**

*Cash distributions are not guaranteed and may fluctuate with our performance and other external factors.*

The amount of cash we can distribute on our common units or other partnership securities depends upon the amount of cash we generate from our operations. The amount of cash we generate from our operations will fluctuate from quarter to quarter and will depend upon, among other things:

the amount of natural gas transported on the Oasis Pipeline and in our gathering systems;

the level of throughput in our processing and treating operations;

the fees we charge and the margins we realize for our services;

the price of natural gas;

the relationship between natural gas and NGL prices;

the weather in our operating areas;

the cost to us of the propane we buy for resale and the prices we receive for our propane;

the level of competition from other propane companies and other energy providers;

the level of our operating costs; and

prevailing economic conditions.

In addition, the actual amount of cash available for distribution will also depend on other factors, such as:

the level of capital expenditures we make;

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

the cost of acquisitions, if any;

our debt service requirements;

fluctuations in our working capital needs;

our ability to make working capital borrowings under our credit facilities to make distributions;

restrictions on distributions contained in our debt agreements; and

the amount, if any, of cash reserves established by the general partner in its discretion for the proper conduct of our business. Because of all these factors, we cannot guarantee that we will have sufficient available cash to pay a specific level of cash distributions to our unitholders.

Furthermore, you should be aware that the amount of cash we have available for distribution depends primarily upon our cash flow, including cash flow from financial reserves and working capital borrowings, and is not solely a



**Table of Contents**

function of profitability, which will be affected by non-cash items. As a result, we may make cash distributions during periods when we record net losses and may not make cash distributions during periods when we record net income.

*We may sell additional limited partner interests, diluting existing interests of unitholders.*

Our partnership agreement allows us to issue an unlimited number of additional limited partner interests, including securities senior to the common units, without the approval of the unitholders. The issuance of additional common units or other equity securities will have the following effects:

the current proportionate ownership interest of our unitholders in us will decrease;

the amount of cash available for distribution on each common unit or partnership security may decrease;

the relative voting strength of each previously outstanding common unit may be diminished; and

the market price of the common units or partnership securities may decline.

***Future sales of our units or other limited partner interests in the trading market could reduce the market price of unitholders' limited partner interests.***

As of February 28, 2006, Energy Transfer Equity, L.P., which we refer to as "ETE" in this prospectus (formerly La Grange Energy, L.P.), owned 33,843,690 common units and 2,570,150 Class F units, which may be converted to common units, of which 32,773,840 common units are registered pursuant to a registration statement. ETE owns our general partner. If ETE were to sell and/or distribute its common units to the holders of its equity interests in the future, those holders may dispose of some or all of these units. The sale or disposition of a substantial portion of these units in the trading markets, it could reduce the market price of our outstanding common units.

***Our increased debt level and debt agreements may limit our ability to make distributions to unitholders and our future financial and operating flexibility.***

As of February 28, 2006, our indebtedness consisted of \$750.0 million in principal amount of 5.95% Senior Notes due 2015, \$400.0 million in principal amount of 5.65% Senior Notes due 2012 and a Revolving Credit Facility that allows for borrowings of up to \$900.0 million through January 18, 2010. We also maintain separate credit facilities for HOLP. The terms of our indebtedness and our operating partnerships, ETC, OLP and HOLP, (which are collectively referred to as the "Operating Partnerships" in this prospectus), are described in more detail below. Our level of indebtedness affects our operations in several ways, including, among other things:

a significant portion of our cash flow from operations will be dedicated to the payment of principal and interest on outstanding debt and will not be available for other purposes, including payment of distributions;

covenants contained in our existing debt arrangements require us to meet financial tests that may adversely affect our flexibility in planning for and reacting to changes in our business;

our ability to obtain additional financing for working capital, capital expenditures, acquisitions and general partnership purposes may be limited;

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

we may be at a competitive disadvantage relative to similar companies that have less debt; and

we may be more vulnerable to adverse economic and industry conditions as a result of our significant debt level.

failure to comply with the various restrictive and affirmative covenants of the credit agreements could negatively impact our ability and the ability of our subsidiaries to incur additional debt and our ability to pay our distributions. We are required to measure these financial tests and covenants quarterly and, as of February 28, 2006, we were in compliance with all financial requirements, tests, limitations, and covenants related to financial ratios under our existing credit agreements.

## **Table of Contents**

### **Senior Notes**

On January 18, 2005, in a Rule 144A private placement offering, we issued \$750.0 million in aggregate principal amount of 5.95% Senior Notes due on February 1, 2015, which we refer to as the 2015 Unregistered Notes in this prospectus. We recorded a discount of \$2.2 million and debt issue costs of \$7.4 million in connection with the issuance of the 2015 Unregistered Notes. The net proceeds of approximately \$741.0 million were used to repay the indebtedness and accrued interest outstanding under the then existing credit facilities that were previously secured by the assets of ETC OLP. On July 29, 2005, we completed the exchange of the 2015 Unregistered Notes for substantially similar notes registered under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.

On July 29, 2005, in a Rule 144A private placement offering, we issued \$400.0 million in aggregate principal amount of 5.65% Senior Notes due on August 1, 2012, which we refer to as the 2012 Unregistered Notes in this prospectus and together with the 2015 Unregistered Notes, the ETP Senior Notes. We recorded a discount of \$0.4 million in connection with the issuance of the 2012 Unregistered Notes. The net proceeds of approximately \$397.1 million from the sale of the 2012 Unregistered Notes were used to retire a portion of our outstanding indebtedness under our revolving credit facility, to fund our recently announced capital expansion projects and for general partnership purposes. We commenced an offer to exchange the 2012 Unregistered Notes for substantially similar registered notes, which closed on March 31, 2006. All \$400.0 million of Unregistered Notes were tendered and will be replaced with a like amount of substantially similar registered notes.

The ETP Senior Notes represent senior unsecured obligations of Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. and rank equally with all of our other existing and future unsecured and unsubordinated indebtedness. The ETP Senior Notes are jointly and severally guaranteed by ETC OLP and all of the direct and indirect wholly-owned and majority-owned subsidiaries of ETC OLP. The subsidiary guarantees rank equally in right of payment with all of the existing and future unsubordinated indebtedness of our guarantor subsidiaries. The ETP Senior Notes and each guarantee will effectively rank junior to any future indebtedness of ours or our subsidiary guarantors that is both secured and unsubordinated to the extent of the value of the assets securing such indebtedness, and the ETP Senior Notes will effectively rank junior to all indebtedness and other liabilities of our existing and future subsidiaries that are not subsidiary guarantors.

The ETP Senior Notes were issued under an indenture containing covenants, which include covenants that restrict our ability to, subject to certain exceptions, incur debt secured by liens, engage in sale and leaseback transactions or merge or consolidate with another entity or sell substantially all of our assets.

### **Revolving Credit Facility**

On December 13, 2005, we entered into the ETP Revolving Credit Facility, a \$900 million five-year revolving credit facility available through December 13, 2010 which replaced our previous revolving credit facility. The ETP Revolving Credit Facility also offers a Swingline loan option with a maximum borrowing of \$50 million and a daily rate based on the London market. Amounts borrowed under the ETP Revolving Credit Facility bear interest at a rate based on either a Eurodollar rate, or a prime rate. The maximum commitment fee payable on the unused portion of the facility is 0.25%.

The ETP Revolving Credit Facility requires that, on the last day of each of our fiscal quarters, the ratio of our Consolidated Funded Debt (as defined in the credit agreement relating to the ETP Revolving Credit Facility) to our Consolidated EBITDA (as defined in the credit agreement relating to the ETP Revolving Credit Facility) for the four fiscal quarters most recently ended must be no greater than 4.75 to 1.00 except that, on the last day of any fiscal quarter in which we or our subsidiaries makes an acquisition with a purchase price of \$50.0 million or more such ratio must be no greater than 5.25 to 1.0. You should note that our Consolidated Debt to our Consolidated EBITDA for purposes of our financial covenants includes only our operations and our Restricted subsidiaries operations and

**Table of Contents**

exclude our operations and those of our subsidiaries that are not Restricted subsidiaries. In addition, this facility requires that the ratio of our Consolidated EBITDA (as defined in the credit agreement relating to the ETP Revolving Credit Facility) to our Consolidated Interest Expense (as defined in the credit agreement relating to the ETP Revolving Credit Facility) for the four fiscal quarters most recently ended must not be less than 3.0 to 1.0. We satisfied our leverage ratio covenants for the fiscal years ended August 31, 2005 and for the three months ended November 30, 2005 and therefor were able to make the cash distributions at the levels we distributed during these periods.

ETC OLP and its designated subsidiaries act as guarantors of the debt obligations under the ETP Revolving Credit Facility. If we were to default on the ETP Revolving Credit Facility, ETC OLP and its designated subsidiaries would be responsible for full repayment of our debt obligations under the ETP Revolving Credit Facility. The ETP Revolving Credit Facility is unsecured and the lenders thereunder have equal rights to holders of our other current and future unsecured senior debt.

**HOLP Facilities**

*Working Capital Facility.* Effective March 31, 2004, HOLP entered into the Third Amended and Restated Credit Agreement, which includes a \$75.0 million senior revolving working capital facility available through December 31, 2006, which we refer to as the *HOLP Working Capital Facility* in this prospectus. Amounts borrowed under the working capital facility bear interest at a rate based on either a Eurodollar rate or a prime rate. The weighted average interest rate was 5.308% for the amount outstanding at August 31, 2005. HOLP must reduce the principal amount of working capital borrowings to \$10.0 million for a period of not less than 30 consecutive days at least one time during each fiscal year. HOLP completed the 30-day clean down requirement under the HOLP Working Capital Facility on June 14, 2005. All receivables, contracts, equipment (other than vehicles), inventory, general intangibles, cash concentration accounts of HOLP, and the capital stock of HOLP's subsidiaries secure the HOLP Working Capital Facility. A \$5.0 million Letter of Credit issuance is available to HOLP for up to 30 days prior to the maturity date of the Working Capital Facility. As of February 28, 2006, the HOLP Working Capital Facility had a balance outstanding of \$21.2 million and \$6.1 million of outstanding letters of credit. Letter of Credit Exposure plus the Working Capital Loan cannot exceed the \$75.0 million maximum Working Capital Facility.

*Senior Secured Notes.* In connection with our initial public offering, on June 25, 1996, HOLP entered into a Note Purchase Agreement whereby HOLP issued \$120 million principal amount of 8.55% Senior Secured Notes, which we refer to as the *HOLP Notes* in this prospectus, with institutional investors. Interest is payable semi-annually in arrears on each December 31 and June 30. The HOLP Notes have a final maturity of June 30, 2011, with ten equal mandatory repayments of principal, which began on June 30, 2002. At February 28, 2006, \$72 million of principal debt was outstanding under the HOLP Notes.

On November 19, 1997, HOLP entered into a Note Purchase Agreement that provided for the issuance of up to \$100 million of senior secured promissory notes, which we refer to as *HOLP Medium Term Note Program* in this prospectus, if certain conditions were met. An initial placement of \$32 million (Series A and B), at an average interest rate of 7.23% with an average 10-year maturity, was completed at the closing of the HOLP Medium Term Note Program. Interest is payable semi-annually in arrears on each November 19 and May 19. An additional placement of \$15 million (Series C, D and E), at an average interest rate of 6.59% with an average 12-year maturity, was completed in March 1998. Interest is payable on Series C and D semi-annually in arrears on each September 13 and March 13. The proceeds of the placements were used to refinance amounts outstanding under the HOLP Acquisition Facility. No future placements are permitted under the unused portion of the HOLP Medium Term Note Program. During the fiscal year ended August 31, 2003, Heritage used \$3.9 million and \$5.0 million of the proceeds from the issuance of 1,610,000 of Common Units to retire the balance of the Series D and Series E Senior Secured Notes, respectively. At February 28, 2006, \$24.3 million of principal debt was outstanding under the HOLP Medium Term Note Program.

On August 10, 2000, HOLP entered into a Note Purchase Agreement, which we refer to as *HOLP Senior Secured Promissory Notes* in this prospectus, that provided for the issuance of up to \$250 million of fixed rate senior secured promissory notes if certain conditions were met. An initial placement of \$180 million (Series A through F) at an average rate of 8.66% with an average 13-year maturity was completed in conjunction with the merger with U.S. Propane. Interest is payable quarterly. The proceeds were used to finance the transaction with U.S. Propane and retire a portion of existing debt. On May 24, 2001, HOLP issued an additional \$70 million (Series

**Table of Contents**

G through I) of the Senior Secured Promissory Notes to a group of institutional lenders with 7-, 12- and 15-year maturities and an average coupon rate of 7.66%. HOLF used the net proceeds from the Senior Secured Promissory Notes to repay the balance outstanding under the HOLF Acquisition Facility and to reduce other debt. Interest is payable quarterly. During the fiscal year ended August 31, 2003, HOLF used \$7.5 million and \$19.5 million of the proceeds from the issuance of 1,610,000 of common units to retire a portion of the Series G and Series H Senior Secured Promissory Notes, respectively. At February 28, 2006, \$196.7 million of principal debt was outstanding under the HOLF Senior Secured Promissory Notes.

*Covenants Related to HOLF Credit Agreements.* The Note Agreements for each of the HOLF Notes, the HOLF Medium Term Note Program and the HOLF Senior Secured Promissory Notes, and HOLF Working Capital Facility contain customary restrictive covenants applicable to HOLF, changes in ownership of HOLF, including limitations on the level of additional indebtedness, creation of liens, and substantial disposition of assets. These covenants require HOLF to maintain ratios of Consolidated Funded Indebtedness to Consolidated EBITDA (as defined in the Note Purchase Agreements of HOLF) of not more than 4.75 to 1.00 and Consolidated EBITDA to Consolidated Interest Expense (as defined in the Note Purchase Agreements of HOLF) of not less than 2.25 to 1. For purposes of calculating the ratios under the Note Purchase Agreements of HOLF, Consolidated EBITDA is based upon the HOLF's EBITDA, as adjusted, during the most recent four quarterly periods and modified to give pro forma effect for acquisitions and divestitures made during the test period, and is compared to Consolidated Funded Indebtedness as of the test date and the Consolidated Interest Expense for the most recent twelve months. The Note Purchase Agreements also provide that HOLF may declare, make, or incur a liability to make, a restricted payment during each fiscal quarter, if: (a) the amount of such restricted payment, together with all other restricted payments during such quarter, do not exceed Available Cash (As defined in the Note Purchase Agreements of HOLF) with respect to the immediately preceding quarter; (b) no default or event of default exists before such restricted payment; and (c) HOLF's restricted payments are not greater than the product of HOLF's Percentage of Aggregate Partner Obligations (as defined in the Note Purchase Agreements). The Note Purchase Agreements further provide that HOLF's Available Cash is required to reflect a reserve equal to 50% of the interest to be paid on the HOLF Notes. In addition, in the third, second and first quarters preceding a quarter in which a scheduled principal payment is to be made on the notes, Available Cash is required to reflect a reserve equal to 25%, 50%, and 75%, respectively, of the principal amount to be repaid on such payment dates.

Failure to comply with the various restrictive and affirmative covenants of HOLF Working Capital Facility and the Note Agreements could negatively impact our ability to incur additional debt and our ability to pay distributions. We are required to measure these financial tests and covenants quarterly and were in compliance with all financial requirements, tests, limitations, and covenants related to financial ratios under the Senior Secured Notes, Medium Term Note Program, Senior Secured Promissory Notes, and the Working Capital Facility at February 28, 2006. All receivables, contracts, equipment, inventory, general intangibles, cash concentration accounts, and the capital stock of HOLF and its subsidiaries secure the Senior Secured, Medium Term, and Senior Secured Promissory Notes. In addition to the stated interest rate for the Notes, we are required to pay an additional 1% per annum on the outstanding balance of the Notes at such time as the Notes are not rated investment grade status or higher. Since April 18, 2004 the Notes have rated investment grade or better thereby alleviating the requirement that we pay the additional 1% interest.

***We may not be able to fully execute our growth strategy if we encounter illiquid capital markets or increased competition for qualified assets.***

Our strategy contemplates growth through the development and acquisition of a wide range of midstream, transportation, propane and other energy infrastructure assets while maintaining a strong balance sheet. This strategy includes constructing and acquiring additional assets and businesses to enhance our ability to compete effectively and diversify our asset portfolio, thereby providing more stable cash flow. We regularly consider and enter into discussions regarding, and are currently contemplating, the acquisition of additional assets and businesses, stand alone development projects or other transactions that we believe will present opportunities to realize synergies and increase our market position.

We may require substantial new capital to finance the future development and acquisition of assets and businesses. Limitations on our access to capital will impair our ability to execute this strategy. Expensive capital will limit our ability to develop or acquire accretive assets. We may not be able to raise the necessary funds on satisfactory terms, if at all.

## **Table of Contents**

Consistent with our acquisition strategy, we are continuously engaged in discussions with potential sellers regarding the possible acquisition of additional assets or businesses. Such acquisition efforts may involve our participation in processes that involve a number of potential buyers, commonly referred to as "auction" processes, as well as situations where we believe we are the only party or one of a very limited number of potential buyers in negotiations with the potential seller. We can give you no assurance that our current or future acquisition efforts will be successful or that any such acquisition will be completed on terms considered favorable to us.

In addition, we are experiencing increased competition for the assets we purchase or contemplate purchasing. Increased competition for a limited pool of assets could result in our losing to other bidders more often or acquiring assets at higher prices. Either occurrence would limit our ability to fully execute our growth strategy. Our inability to execute our growth strategy may materially adversely impact the market price of our securities.

***The general partner is not elected by the unitholders and cannot be removed without its consent.***

Unlike the holders of common stock in a corporation, unitholders have only limited voting rights on matters affecting our business, and therefore limited ability to influence management's decisions regarding our business. Unitholders did not elect our general partner and will have no right to elect our general partner on an annual or other continuing basis. Although our general partner has a fiduciary duty to manage us in a manner beneficial to Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. and the unitholders, the directors of our general partner and its general partner, Energy Transfer Partners, L.L.C., have a fiduciary duty to manage the general partner and its general partner in a manner beneficial to the owners of those entities.

Furthermore, if the unitholders are dissatisfied with the performance of our general partner, they will have little ability to remove our general partner. The general partner generally may not be removed except upon the vote of the holders of 66 2/3% of the outstanding units voting together as a single class, including units owned by the general partner and its affiliates. Prior to any sales or distributions pursuant to this prospectus, the owner of our general partner and its affiliates held approximately 33% of all the units, with an approximately 2% of units held by our officers and directors. Consequently, it could be difficult to remove the general partner without the consent of the general partner and our affiliates.

Furthermore, unitholders' voting rights are further restricted by the partnership agreement provision providing that any units held by a person that owns 20% or more of any class of units then outstanding, other than the general partner and its affiliates, cannot be voted on any matter.

***The control of our general partner may be transferred to a third party without unitholder consent.***

The general partner may transfer its general partner interest to a third party in a merger or in a sale of all or substantially all of its assets without the consent of the unitholders. Furthermore, there is no restriction in the partnership agreement on the ability of the general partner of our general partner from transferring its general partner interest in our general partner to a third party. Any new owner of the general partner would be in a position to replace the officers of the general partner with its own choices and to control the decisions taken by such officers.

***Unitholders may be required to sell their units to the general partner at an undesirable time or price.***

If at any time less than 20% of the outstanding units of any class are held by persons other than the general partner and its affiliates, the general partner will have the right to acquire all, but not less than all, of those units at a price no less than their then-current market price. As a consequence, a unitholder may be required to sell his common units at an undesirable time or price. The general partner may assign this purchase right to any of its affiliates or to us.

***Cost reimbursements due our general partner may be substantial and reduce our ability to pay the distributions to unitholders.***

Prior to making any distributions on the units, we will reimburse our general partner for all expenses it has incurred on our behalf. In addition, our general partner and its affiliates may provide us with services for which we will be charged reasonable fees as determined by the general partner. The reimbursement of these expenses and the payment of these fees could adversely affect our ability to make distributions to the unitholders. Our general partner has sole discretion to determine the amount of these expenses and fees.

---

**Table of Contents**

***Unitholders may have liability to repay distributions.***

Under certain circumstances unitholders may have to repay us amounts wrongfully returned or distributed to them. Under Delaware law, we may not make a distribution to you if the distribution causes our liabilities to exceed the fair value of our assets. Liabilities to partners on account of their partnership interests and non-recourse liabilities are not counted for purposes of determining whether a distribution is permitted. Delaware law provides that a limited partner who receives such a distribution and knew at the time of the distribution that the distribution violated Delaware law will be liable to the limited partnership for the distribution amount for three years from the distribution date. Under Delaware law, an assignee who becomes a substituted limited partner of a limited partnership is liable for the obligations of the assignor to make contributions to the partnership. However, such an assignee is not obligated for liabilities unknown to him at the time he or she became a limited partner if the liabilities could not be determined from the partnership agreement.

***Our partnership agreement limits our general partner's fiduciary duties to our unitholders and restricts the remedies available to unitholders for actions taken by our general partner that might otherwise constitute breaches of fiduciary duty.***

Our partnership agreement contains provisions that waive or consent to conduct by our general partner and its affiliates that reduce the obligations to which our general partner would otherwise be held by state-law fiduciary duty standards. The following is a summary of the material restrictions contained in our partnership agreement on the fiduciary duties owed by our general partner to the limited partners. Our partnership agreement:

permits our general partner to make a number of decisions in its sole discretion. This entitles our general partner to consider only the interests and factors that it desires, and it has no duty or obligation to give any consideration to any interest of, or factors affecting, us, our affiliates or any limited partner;

provides that our general partner is entitled to make other decisions in its reasonable discretion ;

generally provides that affiliated transactions and resolutions of conflicts of interest not involving a required vote of unitholders must be fair and reasonable to us and that, in determining whether a transaction or resolution is fair and reasonable, our general partner may consider the interests of all parties involved, including its own. Unless our general partner has acted in bad faith, the action taken by our general partner shall not constitute a breach of its fiduciary duty; and

provides that our general partner and its officers and directors will not be liable for monetary damages to us, our limited partners or assignees for errors of judgment or for any acts or omissions if our general partner and those other persons acted in good faith.

In order to become a limited partner of our partnership, a common unitholder is required to agree to be bound by the provisions in the partnership agreement, including the provisions discussed above.

***The general partner's absolute discretion in determining the level of cash reserves may adversely affect our ability to make cash distributions to our unitholders.***

Our partnership agreement requires the general partner to deduct from operating surplus cash reserves that in its reasonable discretion are necessary to fund our future operating expenditures. In addition, the partnership agreement permits the general partner to reduce available cash by establishing cash reserves for the proper conduct of our business, to comply with applicable law or agreements to which we are a party or to provide funds for future distributions to partners. These cash reserves will affect the amount of cash available for distribution to unitholders.

## **Table of Contents**

*Our general partner has conflicts of interest and limited fiduciary responsibilities, which may permit our general partner to favor its own interests to the detriment of unitholders.*

Prior to any sales or distributions pursuant to this prospectus, the owner of our general partner and its affiliates directly and indirectly owned an aggregate limited partner interest of approximately 31% and our officers and directors owned approximately 2% of the limited partner interests in us. Conflicts of interest could arise in the future as a result of relationships between our general partner and its affiliates, on the one hand, and us, on the other hand. As a result of these conflicts our general partner may favor its own interests and those of its affiliates over the interests of the unitholders. The nature of these conflicts includes the following considerations:

Remedies available to unitholders for actions that might, without the limitations, constitute breaches of fiduciary duty. Unitholders are deemed to have consented to some actions and conflicts of interest that might otherwise be deemed a breach of fiduciary or other duties under applicable state law.

Our general partner is allowed to take into account the interests of parties in addition to us in resolving conflicts of interest, thereby limiting its fiduciary duties to the unitholders.

Our general partner's affiliates are not prohibited from engaging in other businesses or activities, including those in direct competition with us.

Our general partner determines the amount and timing of asset purchases and sales, capital expenditures, borrowings and reserves, each of which can affect the amount of cash that is distributed to unitholders.

Our general partner determines whether to issue additional units or other equity securities of us.

Our general partner determines which costs are reimbursable by us.

Our general partner controls the enforcement of obligations owed to us by it.

Our general partner decides whether to retain separate counsel, accountants or others to perform services for us.

Our general partner is not restricted from causing us to pay it or its affiliates for any services rendered on terms that are fair and reasonable to us or entering into additional contractual arrangements with any of these entities on our behalf.

In some instances our general partner may borrow funds in order to permit the payment of distributions, even if the purpose or effect of the borrowing is to make incentive distributions.

## **Risks Related to our Business**

*The profitability of our midstream, transportation and storage business is largely dependent upon natural gas commodity prices, price spreads between two or more physical locations and market demand for natural gas and NGLs, which are factors beyond our control and have been volatile.*



## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

Income from our midstream, transportation and storage business is exposed to risks due to fluctuations in commodity prices. For a portion of the natural gas gathered at the Southeast Texas System, we purchase natural gas from producers at the wellhead at a price that is at a discount to a specified index price and then gather and deliver the natural gas to pipelines where we typically resell the natural gas at the index price. Generally, the gross margins we realize under these discount-to-index arrangements decrease in periods of low natural gas prices because these gross margins are based on a percentage of the index price. Accordingly, an increase in the price of natural gas relative to the price of NGLs could have a material adverse effect on our results of operations.

For a portion of the natural gas gathered at the Southeast Texas System, we enter into percentage-of-proceeds arrangements and keep-whole arrangements, pursuant to which we agree to gather and process natural gas received from the producers. Under percentage-of-proceeds arrangements, we generally sell the residue gas and NGLs at market prices and remit to the producers an agreed upon percentage of the proceeds based on an index price. In other

## **Table of Contents**

cases, instead of remitting cash payments to the producer, we deliver an agreed upon percentage of the residue gas and NGL volumes to the producer and sell the volumes we keep to third parties at market prices. Under these arrangements our revenues and gross margins decline when natural gas prices and NGL prices decrease. Accordingly, a decrease in the price of natural gas or NGLs could have an adverse effect on our results of operations. Under keep-whole arrangements, we generally sell the NGLs produced from our gathering and processing operations to third parties at market prices. Because the extraction of the NGLs from the natural gas during processing reduces the Btu content of the natural gas, we must either purchase natural gas at market prices for return to producers or make a cash payment to producers equal to the value of this natural gas. Under these arrangements, our revenues and gross margins decrease when the price of natural gas increases relative to the price of NGLs if we are not able to bypass our processing plants and sell the unprocessed natural gas.

In the past, the prices of natural gas and NGLs have been extremely volatile, and we expect this volatility to continue. For example, during our fiscal year ended August 31, 2005, the New York Mercantile Exchange, or NYMEX, settlement price for the prior month contract ranged from a high of \$7.98 per MMBtu to a low of \$5.08 per MMBtu. A composite of the Mt. Belvieu average NGLs price based upon our average NGLs composition during our fiscal year ended August 31, 2005 ranged from a high of approximately \$0.98 per gallon to a low of approximately \$0.73 per gallon.

Average realized natural gas sales prices for the twelve months ended November 30, 2005 exceeded our historical realized natural gas prices. For example, our average realized natural gas price increased \$2.21, or 37%, from \$5.98 per MMBtu for the twelve months ended November 30, 2004 to \$8.19 per MMBtu for the twelve months ended November 30, 2005. On January 3, 2006, the NYMEX settlement price for February 2006 natural gas deliveries was \$10.626 per MMBtu, which was 30% higher than our average natural gas price for the twelve months ended November 30, 2005. Natural gas prices are subject to significant fluctuations, and we cannot assure you that natural gas prices will remain at the high levels recently experienced.

Our Oasis Pipeline, East Texas Pipeline System, ET Fuel System and Houston Pipeline System receive fees for transporting natural gas for our customers. Although a significant amount of the pipeline capacity of the East Texas Pipeline System and various pipeline segments of the ET Fuel System is committed under long-term fee-based contracts, the remaining capacity of our transportation pipelines is subject to fluctuation in demand based on the markets and prices for natural gas and NGLs, which factors may result in decisions by natural gas producers to reduce production of natural gas during periods of lower prices for natural gas and NGLs or may result in decisions by end users of natural gas and NGLs to reduce consumption of these fuels during periods of higher prices for these fuels.

The markets and prices for natural gas and NGLs depend upon factors beyond our control. These factors include demand for oil, natural gas and NGLs, which fluctuate with changes in market and economic conditions, and other factors, including:

- the impact of weather on the demand for oil and natural gas;
- the level of domestic oil and natural gas production;
- the availability of imported oil and natural gas;
- actions taken by foreign oil and gas producing nations;
- the availability of local, intrastate and interstate transportation systems;
- the price, availability and marketing of competitive fuels;
- the demand for electricity;

the impact of energy conservation efforts; and

the extent of governmental regulation and taxation.

---

**Table of Contents**

*Our success depends upon our ability to continually contract for new sources of natural gas supply.*

In order to maintain or increase throughput levels on our gathering and transportation pipeline systems and asset utilization rates at our treating and processing plants, we must continually contract for new natural gas supplies and natural gas transportation services. We may not be able to obtain additional contracts for natural gas supplies for our natural gas gathering systems, and we may be unable to maintain or increase the levels of natural gas throughput on our transportation pipelines. The primary factors affecting our ability to connect new supplies of natural gas to our gathering systems include our success in contracting for existing natural gas supplies that are not committed to other systems and the level of drilling activity and production of natural gas near our gathering systems or in areas that provide access to our transportation pipelines or markets to which our systems connect. The primary factors affecting our ability to attract customers to our transportation pipelines, including Oasis Pipeline, the East Texas Pipeline System, the ET Fuel System or the Houston Pipeline System, consist of our access to other natural gas pipelines, natural gas markets, natural gas-fired power plants and other industrial end-users and the level of drilling and production of natural gas in areas connected to these pipelines and systems.

Fluctuations in energy prices can greatly affect production rates and investments by third parties in the development of new oil and natural gas reserves. Drilling activity and production generally decrease as oil and natural gas prices decrease. We have no control over the level of drilling activity in our areas of operation, the amount of reserves underlying the wells and the rate at which production from a well will decline, sometimes referred to as the decline rate. In addition, we have no control over producers or their production decisions, which are affected by, among other things, prevailing and projected energy prices, demand for hydrocarbons, the level of reserves, geological considerations, governmental regulation and the availability and cost of capital.

A substantial portion of our assets, including our gathering systems and our processing and treating plants, are connected to natural gas reserves and wells for which the production will naturally decline over time. In particular, the Southeast Texas System covers portions of the Austin Chalk, Buda, Georgetown, Edwards, Wilcox and other producing formations in southeast Texas, which we collectively refer to as the Austin Chalk trend. This natural gas producing region has generally been characterized by high initial flow rates followed by steep initial declines in production. Accordingly, our cash flows will also decline unless we are able to access new supplies of natural gas by connecting additional production to these systems.

Our transportation pipelines are also dependent upon natural gas production in areas served by our pipelines or in areas served by other gathering systems or transportation pipelines that connect with our transportation pipelines. A material decrease in natural gas production in our areas of operation or in other areas that are connected to our areas of operation by third party gathering systems or pipelines, as a result of depressed commodity prices or otherwise, would result in a decline in the volume of natural gas we handle, which would reduce our revenues and operating income. In addition, our future growth will depend, in part, upon whether we can contract for additional supplies at a greater rate than the rate of natural decline in our currently connected supplies.

The volumes of natural gas we transport on our pipelines may be reduced in the event that the prices at which natural gas is purchased and sold at the Waha Hub, the Katy Hub, the Carthage Hub and the Houston Ship Channel Hub, the four major natural gas trading hubs served by our pipelines, become unfavorable in relation to prices for natural gas at other natural gas trading hubs or in other markets as customers may elect to transport their natural gas to these other hubs or markets using pipelines other than those we operate.

*We may not be able to fully execute our growth strategy if we encounter illiquid capital markets or increased competition for qualified assets.*

Our strategy contemplates growth through the development and acquisition of a wide range of midstream, transportation, storage, propane and other energy infrastructure assets while maintaining a strong balance sheet. This strategy includes constructing and acquiring additional assets and businesses to enhance our ability to compete effectively and diversify our asset portfolio, thereby providing more stable cash flow. We regularly consider and enter into discussions regarding, and are currently contemplating, the acquisition of additional assets and businesses, stand alone development projects or other transactions that we believe will present opportunities to realize synergies and increase our cash flow.

## Table of Contents

We may require substantial new capital to finance the future development and acquisition of assets and businesses. Limitations on our access to capital will impair our ability to execute this strategy. Expensive capital will limit our ability to develop or acquire accretive assets. We may be unable to raise the necessary funds on satisfactory terms, if at all.

Consistent with our acquisition strategy, we are continuously engaged in discussions with potential sellers regarding the possible acquisition of additional assets or businesses. Such acquisition efforts may involve our participation in processes that involve a number of potential buyers, commonly referred to as auction processes, as well as situations in which we believe we are the only party or one of a very limited number of potential buyers in negotiations with the potential seller. We cannot assure you that our current or future acquisition efforts will be successful or that any such acquisition will be completed on terms considered favorable to us.

In addition, we are experiencing increased competition for the assets we purchase or contemplate purchasing. Increased competition for a limited pool of assets could result in us losing to other bidders more often or acquiring assets at higher prices. Either occurrence would limit our ability to fully execute our growth strategy. Our inability to execute our growth strategy may materially adversely impact the market price of our securities.

***If we do not make acquisitions on economically acceptable terms, our future growth could be limited.***

Historically, our results of operations and our ability to grow and to increase distributions to unitholders has depended principally on our ability to make acquisitions that are accretive to our distributable cash flow per unit. Our acquisition strategy is based, in part, on our expectation of ongoing divestitures of pipeline assets by large industry participants. A material decrease in such divestitures would limit our opportunities for future acquisitions and could adversely affect our business, results of operations, financial condition and cash flows available for distribution to our unitholders.

In addition, we may be unable to make accretive acquisitions for any of the following reasons, among others:

because we are unable to identify attractive acquisition candidates or negotiate acceptable purchase contracts with them;

because we are unable to raise financing for such acquisitions on economically acceptable terms;

because we are outbid by competitors, some of which are substantially larger than us and have greater financial resources and lower costs of capital than we do; or

because a proposed acquisition is prohibited by applicable antitrust, anti-takeover or other regulations in the United States. Furthermore, even if we consummate acquisitions that we believe will be accretive, those acquisitions may in fact adversely affect our results of operations or result in no increase or even a decrease in distributable cash flow per unit. Any acquisition involves potential risks, including the risk that we may:

fail to successfully integrate and realize anticipated benefits, such as new customer relationships, cost-savings or cash flow enhancements;

decrease our liquidity by using a significant portion of our available cash or borrowing capacity to finance acquisitions;

significantly increase our interest expense or financial leverage if we incur additional debt to finance acquisitions;

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

encounter difficulties operating in new geographic areas or new lines of business;

incur or assume unanticipated liabilities, losses or costs associated with the business or assets acquired for which we are not indemnified or for which the indemnity is inadequate;

---

**Table of Contents**

be unable to hire, train or retrain qualified personnel to manage and operate our growing business and assets;

less effectively manage our historical assets, due to the diversion of management's attention from other business concerns;

incur other significant charges, such as impairment of goodwill or other intangible assets, asset devaluation or restructuring charges. If we consummate future acquisitions, our capitalization and results of operations may change significantly. As we determine the application of our funds and other resources, you will not have an opportunity to evaluate the economics, financial and other relevant information that we will consider.

***We depend on certain key producers for our supply of natural gas on the Southeast Texas System, and the loss of any of these key producers could adversely affect our financial results.***

For our fiscal year ended August 31, 2005, Anadarko Petroleum Corp. and Chesapeake Energy Corp. supplied us with approximately 42% of the Southeast Texas System's natural gas supply. We are not the only option available to these producers for disposition of the natural gas they produce. To the extent that these and other producers may reduce the volumes of natural gas that they supply us, we would be adversely affected unless we were able to acquire comparable supplies of natural gas from other producers.

***We depend on key customers to transport natural gas on our East Texas Pipeline System and ET Fuel System.***

We have entered into a nine- and ten-year fee-based transportation contracts with XTO Energy, Inc. pursuant to which XTO Energy has committed to transport certain minimum volumes of natural gas on our pipelines. We have also entered into an eight-year fee-based transportation contract with TXU Portfolio Management Company, L.P., a subsidiary of TXU Corp., which we refer to as TXU Shipper, to transport natural gas on the ET Fuel System to TXU's electric generating power plants. We have also entered into two eight-year natural gas storage contracts with TXU Shipper to store natural gas at the two natural gas storage facilities that are part of the ET Fuel System. Each of the contracts with TXU Shipper may be extended by TXU Shipper for two additional five-year terms. The failure of XTO Energy or TXU Shipper to fulfill their contractual obligations under these contracts could have a material adverse effect on our cash flow and results of operations if we were not able to replace these customers under arrangements that provide similar economic benefits as these existing contracts.

***Federal, state or local regulatory measures could adversely affect our business.***

As a natural gas gatherer and intrastate pipeline company, we are generally exempt from Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC, regulation under the Natural Gas Act of 1938, or NGA, but FERC regulation still significantly affects our business and the market for our products. In recent years, FERC has pursued pro-competitive policies in the regulation of interstate natural gas pipelines. However, we cannot assure you that FERC will continue this approach as it considers matters such as pipeline rates and rules and policies that may affect rights of access to natural gas transportation capacity, transportation and storage facilities. The rates, terms and conditions of some of the transportation and storage services we provide on the Oasis Pipeline and the ET Fuel System are subject to FERC regulation under Section 311 of the Natural Gas Policy Act, or NGPA. Under Section 311, rates charged for transportation and storage must be fair and equitable amounts. Amounts collected in excess of fair and equitable rates are subject to refund with interest, and the terms and conditions of service, set forth in the pipeline's Statement of Operating Conditions, are subject to FERC approval. Failure to observe the service limitations applicable to storage and transportation service under Section 311, failure to comply with the rates approved by FERC for Section 311 service, and failure to comply with the terms and conditions of service established in the pipeline's FERC-approved Statement of Operating Conditions could result in an alteration of jurisdictional status and/or the imposition of administrative, civil and criminal penalties.

Our intrastate natural gas transportation and storage facilities are subject to state regulation in Texas and Louisiana, the states in which we operate these types of pipelines. Our intrastate transportation facilities located in Texas are subject to regulation as common purchasers and as gas utilities by the Texas Railroad Commission, or TRRC. The TRRC's jurisdiction extends to both rates and pipeline safety. The rates we charge for transportation and storage services are deemed just and reasonable under Texas law unless challenged in a complaint. Should a complaint be filed or should regulation become more active, our business may be adversely affected.

## **Table of Contents**

Our pipeline operations are also subject to ratable take and common purchaser statutes in Texas and Louisiana, the states where we operate. Ratable take statutes generally require gatherers to take, without undue discrimination, natural gas production that may be tendered to the gatherer for handling. Similarly, common purchaser statutes generally require gatherers to purchase without undue discrimination as to source of supply or producer. These statutes have the effect of restricting our right as an owner of gathering facilities to decide with whom we contract to purchase or transport natural gas. Federal law leaves any economic regulation of natural gas gathering to the states, and some of the states in which we operate have adopted complaint-based or other limited economic regulation of natural gas gathering activities. States in which we operate that have adopted some form of complaint-based regulation, like Texas, generally allow natural gas producers and shippers to file complaints with state regulators in an effort to resolve grievances relating to natural gas gathering rates and access. Other state and local regulations also affect our business.

Our storage facilities are also subject to the jurisdiction of the TRRC. Generally, the TRRC has jurisdiction over all underground storage of natural gas in Texas, unless the facility is part of an interstate gas pipeline facility. Because the ET Fuel System and the Houston Pipeline System natural gas storage facilities are only connected to intrastate gas pipelines, they fall within the TRRC's jurisdiction and must be operated pursuant to TRRC permit. Certain changes in ownership or operation of TRCC jurisdictional storage facilities, such as facility expansions and increases in the maximum operating pressure, must be approved by the TRRC through an amendment to the facility's existing permit. In addition, the TRRC must approve transfers of the permits. The TRRC's regulations also require all natural gas storage facilities to be operated to prevent waste, the uncontrolled escape of gas, pollution and danger to life or property. Accordingly, the TRRC requires natural gas storage facilities to implement certain safety, monitoring, reporting and record-keeping measures. Violations of the terms and provisions of a TRRC permit or a TRRC order or regulation can result in the modification, cancellation or suspension of an operating permit and/or civil penalties, injunctive relief, or both.

The states in which we conduct operations administer federal pipeline safety standards under the Pipeline Safety Act of 1968, which requires certain pipeline companies to comply with safety standards in constructing and operating the pipelines, and subjects pipelines to regular inspections. Some of our gathering facilities are exempt from the requirements of this Act. In respect to recent pipeline accidents in other parts of the country, Congress and the Department of Transportation have passed or are considering heightened pipeline safety requirements.

Failure to comply with applicable regulations under the NGA, NGPA, Pipeline Safety Act and certain state laws could result in the imposition of administrative, civil and criminal remedies.

### ***Our business involves hazardous substances and may be adversely affected by environmental regulation.***

Our natural gas midstream, transportation and storage, as well as our propane, businesses are subject to stringent federal, state, and local environmental laws and regulations governing the discharge of materials into the environment or otherwise relating to environmental protection. These laws and regulations may require the acquisition of permits for our operations, result in capital expenditures to manage, limit, or prevent emissions, discharges, or releases of various materials from our pipelines, plants, and facilities, and impose substantial liabilities for pollution resulting from our operations. Several governmental authorities, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have the power to enforce compliance with these laws and regulations and the permits issued under them and frequently mandate difficult and costly remediation measures and other actions. Failure to comply with these laws, regulations, and permits may result in the assessment of administrative, civil, and criminal penalties, the imposition of remedial obligations, and the issuance of injunctive relief.

We may incur substantial environmental costs and liabilities because the underlying risk are inherent to our operations. Joint and several, strict liability may be incurred under environmental laws and regulations in connection with discharges or releases of petroleum hydrocarbons or wastes on, under, or from our properties and facilities, many of which have been used for industrial activities for a number of years. Private parties, including the owners of properties through which our gathering systems pass or facilities where our petroleum hydrocarbons or wastes are taken for reclamation or disposal, may also have the right to pursue legal actions to enforce compliance as well as to seek damages for non-compliance with environmental laws and regulations or for personal injury or property



---

## **Table of Contents**

damage. In addition, changes in environmental laws and regulations occur frequently, and any such changes that result in more stringent and costly waste handling, storage, transport disposal or remediation requirements could have a material adverse effect on our operations or financial position.

*Any reduction in the capacity of, or the allocations to, our shippers in interconnecting, third-party pipelines could cause a reduction of volumes transported in our pipelines, which would adversely affect our revenues and cash flow.*

Users of our pipelines are dependent upon connections to and from third-party pipelines to receive and deliver natural gas and NGLs. Any reduction in the capacities of these interconnecting pipelines due to testing, line repair, reduced operating pressures, or other causes could result in reduced volumes being transported in our pipelines. Similarly, if additional shippers begin transporting volumes of natural gas and NGLs over interconnecting pipelines, the allocations to existing shippers in these pipelines would be reduced, which could also reduce volumes transported in our pipelines. Any reduction in volumes transported in our pipelines would adversely affect our revenues and cash flow.

*We encounter competition from other midstream, transportation and storage companies and propane companies.*

We experience competition in all of our markets. Our principal areas of competition include obtaining natural gas supplies for the Southeast Texas System and natural gas transportation customers for the Oasis Pipeline, the East Texas Pipeline System and the ET Fuel System. Our competitors include major integrated oil companies, interstate and intrastate pipelines and companies that gather, compress, treat, process, transport, store and market natural gas. The Southeast Texas System competes with natural gas gathering and processing systems owned by Duke Energy Field Services, LLC. The East Texas Pipeline competes with other natural gas transportation pipelines that serve the Bossier Sands area in east Texas and the Barnett Shale area of the Fort Worth Basin in north Texas. The ET Fuel System competes with a number of other natural gas pipelines, including interstate and intrastate pipelines that link the Waha Hub, and the Fort Worth Basin Pipeline competes with other natural gas transportation pipelines serving the Dallas/Ft. Worth area and other pipelines that serve the east central Texas and south Texas markets. Pipelines that we compete with in these areas include those owned by Atmos Energy Corporation, Enterprise Products Partners, L.P., and Enbridge, Inc. Some of our competitors may have greater financial resources and access to larger natural gas supplies than we do.

The acquisition of the Houston Pipeline System increased the number of interstate pipelines and natural gas markets to which we have access and expanded our principal areas of competition to areas such as southeast Texas and the Texas Gulf Coast. As a result of our expanded market presence and diversification, we face additional competitors, such as major integrated oil companies, interstate and intrastate pipelines and companies that gather, compress, treat, process, transport, store and market natural gas, that may have greater financial resources and access to larger natural gas supplies than we do.

Our propane business competes with a number of large national and regional propane companies and several thousand small independent propane companies. Because of the relatively low barriers to entry into the retail propane market, there is potential for small independent propane retailers, as well as other companies that may not currently be engaged in retail propane distribution, to compete with our retail outlets. As a result, we are always subject to the risk of additional competition in the future. Generally, warmer-than-normal weather further intensifies competition. Most of our propane retail branch locations compete with a number of other marketers or distributors in their service areas. The principal factors influencing competition with other retail propane marketers are:

price,

reliability and quality of service,

responsiveness to customer needs,

safety concerns,

long-standing customer relationships,



---

**Table of Contents**

the inconvenience of switching tanks and suppliers, and

the lack of growth in the industry.

***Expanding our business by constructing new pipelines and treating and processing facilities subjects us to risks.***

One of the ways that we expect to grow our business is through the construction of additions to our existing gathering, compression, treating, processing and transportation systems. The construction of a new pipeline or the expansion of an existing pipeline, by adding additional compression capabilities or by adding a second pipeline along an existing pipeline, and the construction of new processing or treating facilities, involve numerous regulatory, environmental, political and legal uncertainties beyond our control and require the expenditure of significant amounts of capital that we will be required to finance through borrowings, the issuance of additional equity or from operating cash flow. If we undertake these projects, they may not be completed on schedule or at all or at the budgeted cost. Moreover, our revenues may not increase immediately following the completion of particular projects. For instance, if we build a new pipeline, the construction will occur over an extended period of time, but we may not materially increase our revenues until long after the project's completion. Moreover, we may construct facilities to capture anticipated future growth in production in a region in which such growth does not materialize. As a result, new facilities may be unable to attract enough throughput to achieve our expected investment return, which could adversely affect our results of operations and financial condition. As a result, the success of a pipeline construction project will likely depend upon the level of natural gas exploration and development drilling activity in the areas proposed to be serviced by the project as well as our ability to obtain commitments from producers in this area to utilize the newly constructed pipelines.

***We are exposed to the credit risk of our customers, and an increase in the nonpayment and nonperformance by our customers could reduce our ability to make distributions to our unitholders.***

The risks of nonpayment and nonperformance by our customers are a major concern in our business. Participants in the energy industry have been subjected to heightened scrutiny from the financial markets in light of past collapses and failures of other energy companies. We are subject to risks of loss resulting from nonpayment or nonperformance by our customers. Any substantial increase in the nonpayment and nonperformance by our customers could reduce our ability to make distributions to our unitholders.

***We may be unable to bypass the La Grange processing plant, which could expose us to the risk of unfavorable processing margins.***

Because of our ownership of the Oasis Pipeline, we can generally elect to bypass the La Grange processing plant when processing margins are unfavorable and instead deliver pipeline-quality gas by blending rich gas from the Southeast Texas System with lean gas transported on the Oasis Pipeline. In some circumstances, such as when we do not have a sufficient amount of lean gas to blend with the volume of rich gas that we receive at the La Grange processing plant, we may have to process the rich gas. If we have to process when processing margins are unfavorable, our results of operations will be adversely affected.

***We may be unable to retain existing customers or secure new customers, which would reduce our revenues and limit our future profitability.***

The renewal or replacement of existing contracts with our customers at rates sufficient to maintain current revenues and cash flows depends on a number of factors beyond our control, including competition from other pipelines, and the price of, and demand for, natural gas in the markets we serve.

For our fiscal year ended August 31, 2005, approximately 33% of our sales of natural gas were to industrial end-users and utilities. As a consequence of the increase in competition in the industry and volatility of natural gas prices, end-users and utilities are increasingly reluctant to enter into long-term purchase contracts. Many end-users purchase natural gas from more than one natural gas company and have the ability to change providers at any time. Some of these end-users also have the ability to switch between gas and alternate fuels in response to relative price fluctuations in the market. Because there are many companies of greatly varying size and financial capacity that compete with us in the marketing of natural gas, we often compete in the end-user and utilities markets primarily on the basis of price. The inability of our management to renew or replace our current contracts as they expire and to respond appropriately to changing market conditions could have a negative effect on our profitability.

## **Table of Contents**

### ***Our storage business depends on neighboring pipelines to transport natural gas.***

To obtain natural gas, our storage business depends on the pipelines to which they have access. Many of these pipelines are owned by parties not affiliated with us. Any interruption of service on those pipelines or adverse change in their terms and conditions of service could have a material adverse effect on our ability, and the ability of our customers, to transport natural gas to and from our facilities and a corresponding material adverse effect on our storage revenues. In addition, the rates charged by those interconnected pipelines for transportation to and from our facilities affect the utilization and value of our storage services. Significant changes in the rates charged by those pipelines or the rates charged by other pipelines with which the interconnected pipelines compete could also have a material adverse effect on our storage revenues.

### ***Our pipeline integrity program may cause us to incur significant costs and liabilities.***

In December 2003, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued a final rule requiring pipeline operators to develop integrity management programs to comprehensively evaluate their pipelines, and take measures to protect pipeline segments located in what the rule refers to as high consequence areas. The final rule resulted from the enactment of the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act of 2002. The final rule was effective as of January 14, 2004. Based on the results of our current pipeline integrity testing programs, we estimate that compliance with this final rule for our existing transportation assets will result in capital costs of \$12.8 million during the period between 2005 to 2008, as well as operating and maintenance costs of \$15.6 million during that three-year period. We are continuing to assess the impact of this final rule on the ET Fuel System and the Houston Pipeline System and cannot predict any estimated compliance costs for those assets at this time. Integrity testing and assessment of all of these assets will continue, and the potential exists that results of such testing and assessment could cause us to incur even greater capital and operating expenditures for repairs or upgrades deemed necessary to ensure the continued safe and reliable operation of our pipelines.

### ***Because weather conditions may adversely affect demand for propane, the volumes of propane sold by, and the results of operations of, our propane business are vulnerable to warm winters.***

Weather conditions have a significant impact on the demand for propane for heating because the majority of our customers rely heavily on propane as a heating fuel. Typically, we sell approximately two-thirds of our retail propane volume during the peak-heating season of October through March. Our propane business can be adversely affected by warmer winter weather which results in lower sales volumes. In addition, to the extent that warm weather or other factors adversely affect our operating and financial results, our access to capital and our acquisition activities may be limited. Variations in weather in one or more of the regions where we operate can significantly affect the total volume of propane that we sell and the profits realized on these sales. Agricultural demand for propane is also affected by weather during the harvest season as poor harvests or dry weather reduce demand for propane used in crop drying.

### ***Sudden and sharp propane price increases that cannot be passed on to customers may adversely affect the profit margins of our propane business.***

The propane industry is a margin-based business in which gross profits depend on the excess of sales prices over supply costs. As a result, the profitability of our propane business is sensitive to changes in energy prices, and in particular, changes in wholesale prices of propane. When there are sudden and sharp increases in the wholesale cost of propane, we may be unable to pass on these increases to our customers through retail or wholesale prices. Propane is a commodity and the price we pay for it can fluctuate significantly in response to changes in supply or other market conditions over which we have no control. In addition, the timing of cost pass-throughs can significantly affect margins. Sudden and extended wholesale price increases could reduce the gross profits from our propane business and could, if continued over an extended period of time, reduce demand by encouraging our retail customers to conserve or convert to alternative energy sources.

## **Table of Contents**

***Our results of operations and our ability to make distributions or pay interest or principal on debt securities could be negatively impacted by price and inventory risk related to our propane business and management of these risks.***

We generally attempt to minimize our cost and inventory risk related to our propane business by purchasing propane on a short-term basis, under supply contracts that typically have a one-year term and at a cost that fluctuates based on the prevailing market prices at major delivery points. In order to help ensure adequate supply sources are available during periods of high demand, we may purchase large volumes of propane during periods of low demand or low price, which generally occur during the summer months, for storage in our facilities, at major storage facilities owned by third parties or for future delivery. This strategy may not be effective in limiting our cost and inventory risks if, for example, market, weather or other conditions prevent or allocate the delivery of physical product during periods of peak demand. If the market price falls below the cost at which we made such purchases, it could adversely affect our profits.

Some of our propane sales are pursuant to commitments at fixed prices. To mitigate the price risk related to our anticipated sales volumes under the commitments, we may purchase and store physical product and/or enter into fixed price over-the-counter energy commodity forward contracts and options. Generally, over-the-counter energy commodity forward contracts have terms of less than one year. We enter into such contracts and exercise such options at volume levels that we believe are necessary to manage these commitments. The risk management of our inventory and contracts for the future purchase of product could impair our profitability if the customers do not fulfill their obligations.

We also engage in other trading activities, and may enter into other types of over-the-counter energy commodity forward contracts and options. These trading activities are based on our management's estimates of future events and prices and are intended to generate a profit. However, if those estimates are incorrect or other market events outside of our control occur, such activities could generate a loss in future periods and potentially impair our profitability.

***We are dependent on our principal propane suppliers, which increases the risk of an interruption in supply.***

During fiscal 2005, we purchased approximately 23.7% of our propane from Enterprise Products Operating L.P., approximately 20.6% of our propane from Dynegy Liquids Marketing and Trade and approximately 23% of our propane from M-P Energy Partnership, the Canadian partnership in which we own a 60% interest. If supplies from these sources were interrupted, the cost of procuring replacement supplies and transporting those supplies from alternative locations might be materially higher and, at least on a short-term basis, margins could be adversely affected. Supply from Canada is subject to the additional risk of disruption associated with foreign trade such as trade restrictions, shipping delays and political, regulatory and economic instability.

Historically, a substantial portion of the propane that we purchase has originated from one of the industry's major markets located in Mt. Belvieu, Texas and has been shipped to us through major common carrier pipelines. Any significant interruption in the service at Mt. Belvieu or other major market points, or on the common carrier pipelines we use would adversely affect our ability to obtain propane.

***Competition from alternative energy sources may cause us to lose propane customers, thereby reducing our revenues.***

Competition in our propane business from alternative energy sources has been increasing as a result of reduced regulation of many utilities. Propane is generally not competitive with natural gas in areas where natural gas pipelines already exist because natural gas is a less expensive source of energy than propane. The gradual expansion of natural gas distribution systems and the availability of natural gas in many areas that previously depended upon propane could cause us to lose customers, thereby reducing our revenues. Fuel oil also competes with propane and is generally less expensive than propane. In addition, the successful development and increasing usage of alternative energy sources could adversely affect our operations.

---

## **Table of Contents**

### ***Energy efficiency and technological advances may affect the demand for propane and adversely affect our operating results.***

The national trend toward increased conservation and technological advances, including installation of improved insulation and the development of more efficient furnaces and other heating devices, has decreased the demand for propane by retail customers. Stricter conservation measures in the future or technological advances in heating, conservation, energy generation or other devices could adversely affect our operations.

### **Tax Risks**

For a general discussion of the expected federal income tax consequences of owning and disposing of common units, see Material Tax Considerations.

### ***The IRS could treat us as a corporation for tax purposes, which would substantially reduce the cash available for distribution to unitholders.***

The anticipated after-tax economic benefit of an investment in our common units depends largely on our being treated as a partnership for federal income tax purposes. We have not requested, and do not plan to request, a ruling from the IRS on this or any other matter affecting us.

If we were treated as a corporation for federal income tax purposes, we would pay federal income tax on our income at the corporate tax rate, which is currently a maximum of 35% and we would likely pay state taxes as well. Distributions to unitholders would generally be taxed again as corporate distributions, and none of our income, gains, losses or deductions would flow through to unitholders. Because a tax would be imposed upon us as a corporation, our cash available for distribution to unitholders would be substantially reduced. Therefore, our treatment as a corporation would result in a material reduction in the after-tax return to the unitholders, likely causing a substantial reduction in the value of our common units.

A change in current law or a change in our business could cause us to be treated as a corporation for federal income tax purposes or otherwise subject us to entity-level taxation. In addition, because of widespread state budget deficits, several states are evaluating ways to subject partnerships to entity-level taxation through the imposition of state income, franchise or other forms of taxation. If any state were to impose a tax upon us as an entity, the cash available for distribution to you would be reduced. Our partnership agreement provides that if a law is enacted or existing law is modified or interpreted in a manner that causes us to be treated as a corporation or otherwise subjects us to entity-level taxation for federal, state or local income tax purposes, then the minimum quarterly distribution and the target distribution levels will be adjusted to reflect that impact on us.

### ***A successful IRS contest of the federal income tax positions we take may adversely affect the market for common units and the costs of any contest will be borne by our unitholders and our general partner.***

We have not requested a ruling from the IRS with respect to any matter affecting us. The IRS may adopt positions that differ from the conclusions of our counsel expressed in this prospectus or from the positions we take. It may be necessary to resort to administrative or court proceedings to sustain our counsel's conclusions or the positions we take. A court may not concur with some or all of our counsel's conclusions or the positions we take. Any contest with the IRS may materially and adversely affect the market for our common units and the price at which they trade. In addition, the costs of any contest with the IRS, principally legal, accounting and related fees, will be indirectly borne by our unitholders and our general partner since such costs will reduce the amount of cash available for distribution.

### ***Unitholders may be required to pay taxes on their share of our income even if they do not receive any cash distributions from us.***

Unitholders will be required to pay federal income taxes and, in some cases, state and local income taxes on their share of our taxable income even if they do not receive any cash distributions from us. Unitholders may not receive cash distributions from us equal to their share of our taxable income or even equal to the actual tax liability that results from the taxation of their share of our taxable income.

## **Table of Contents**

### ***Only calendar year taxpayers may become partners.***

Only calendar year taxpayers may purchase common units. Any unitholder who is not a calendar year taxpayer will not be admitted to Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. as a partner, will not be entitled to receive distributions or federal income tax allocations from Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. and may only transfer these common units to a purchaser or other transferee.

### ***Tax gain or loss on disposition of common units could be different than expected.***

Unitholders who sell common units will recognize gain or loss equal to the difference between the amount realized and their tax basis in those common units. Prior distributions in excess of the total net taxable income allocated for a common unit that decreased a unitholder's tax basis in that common unit will, in effect, become taxable income to the unitholder if the common unit is sold at a price greater than the unitholder's tax basis in that common unit, even if the price is less than his original cost. A substantial portion of the amount the unitholder realizes, whether or not representing gain, will likely be ordinary income to the unitholder. Should the IRS successfully contest some positions we take, a unitholder could recognize more gain on the sale of common units than would be the case under those positions, without the benefit of decreased income in prior years. Also, unitholders who sell common units may incur a tax liability in excess of the amount of cash they receive from the sale.

### ***Tax-exempt entities and foreign persons face unique tax issues from owning common units which may result in adverse tax consequences to them.***

Investment in common units by tax-exempt entities, including employee benefit plans and individual retirement accounts (known as IRAs) and non-U.S. persons raises issues unique to them. For example, virtually all of our income allocated to unitholders who are organizations exempt from federal income tax, may be unrelated business taxable income and will be taxable to them. Distributions to non-U.S. persons will be reduced by withholding taxes, at the highest applicable rate, and non-U.S. persons will be required to file federal income tax returns and generally pay tax on their share of our taxable income. If you are a tax-exempt entity or a non-U.S. person, you should consult your tax advisor before investing in our common units.

### ***We will treat each purchaser of common units as having the same tax benefits without regard to the units purchased. The IRS may challenge this treatment, which could adversely affect the value of the units.***

Because we cannot match transferors and transferees of common units, we will adopt depreciation and amortization positions that do not conform with all aspects of existing Treasury Regulations. A successful IRS challenge to those positions could adversely affect the amount of tax benefits available to you. It also could affect the timing of these tax benefits or the amount of gain from the unitholder's sale of common units and could have a negative impact on the value of the common units or result in audit adjustments to the unitholder's tax returns. Please read [Material Tax Considerations](#), [Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership](#), [Section 754 Election](#) and [Uniformity of Units](#).

### ***Unitholders likely will be subject to state and local taxes in states where they do not live as a result of an investment in the units.***

In addition to federal income taxes, the unitholders may be subject to other taxes, including state and local taxes, unincorporated business taxes and estate, inheritance or intangible taxes that are imposed by the various jurisdictions in which we do business or own property now or in the future, even if they do not live in any of those jurisdictions. We presently have business operations in 34 states. In the future, we may acquire property or do business in other states or in foreign jurisdictions. Unitholders may be required to file state and local income tax returns and pay state and local income taxes in some or all of the jurisdictions. Further, unitholders may be subject to penalties for failure to comply with those requirements. It is the responsibility of each unitholder to file all federal, state and local tax returns. Our counsel has not rendered an opinion on the state or local tax consequences of an investment in us.

**Table of Contents**

*The sale or exchange of 50% or more of our capital and profits interests during any twelve-month period will result in the termination of our partnership for federal income tax purposes.*

We will be considered to have terminated for federal income tax purposes if there is a sale or exchange of 50% or more of the total interests in our capital and profits within a twelve-month period. Our termination would, among other things, result in the closing of our taxable year for all unitholders and could result in a deferral of depreciation deductions allowable in computing our taxable income. Please read **Material Tax Considerations** **Disposition of Common Units** **Constructive Termination** for a discussion of the consequences of our termination for tax purposes.



**Table of Contents**

**FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS**

Some of the information included in this prospectus, any prospectus supplement and the documents we incorporate by reference contain forward-looking statements. These statements discuss goals, intentions and expectations as to future trends, plans, events, results of operations or financial condition, or state other information relating to us, based on the current beliefs of our management as well as assumptions made by, and information currently available to, management.

Statements using words such as anticipate, believe, intend, project, plan, continue, estimate, forecast, may, will, or similar expressions identify forward-looking statements. Although the Partnership believes such forward-looking statements are based on reasonable assumptions and current expectations and projections about future events, no assurance can be given that every objective will be reached.

Actual results may differ materially from any results projected, forecasted, estimated or expressed in forward-looking statements since many of the factors that determine these results are subject to uncertainties and risks, difficult to predict, and beyond management's control. Such factors include:

the general economic conditions in the United States of America as well as the general economic conditions and currencies in foreign countries;

the amount of natural gas transported on our pipelines and gathering systems;

the level and throughput in our natural gas processing and treating facilities;

the fees ETC OLP charges and the margins realized for its services;

the prices and market demand for, and the relationship between, natural gas and NGLs;

energy prices generally;

the price of propane to the consumer compared to the price of alternative and competing fuels;

the general level of petroleum product demand and the availability and price of propane supplies;

the level of domestic oil and natural gas production;

the availability of imported oil and natural gas;

the ability to obtain adequate supplies of propane for retail sale in the event of an interruption in supply or transportation and the availability of capacity to transport propane to market areas;

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

actions taken by foreign oil and gas producing nations;

the political and economic stability of petroleum producing nations;

the effect of weather conditions on demand for oil, natural gas and propane;

the weather in our operating areas;

availability of local, intrastate and interstate transportation systems;

the continued ability to find and contract for new sources of natural gas supply;

availability and marketing of competitive fuels;

the impact of energy conservation efforts;

energy efficiencies and technological trends;

**Table of Contents**

the extent of governmental regulation and taxation;

hazards or operating risks incidental to the transporting, treating and processing of natural gas and NGLs or to the transporting, storing and distributing of propane that may not be fully covered by insurance;

the maturity of the propane industry and competition from other propane distributors;

competition from other midstream companies;

management has limited discretion under board guidelines in conducting our risk management activities and may not accurately predict future price fluctuations and therefore expose us to financial risks and reduce our opportunity to benefit from price fluctuations;

changes in commodity prices may subject us to margin calls, which may adversely affect our liquidity;

loss of key personnel;

loss of key natural gas producers or the providers of fractionation services;

reductions in the capacity or allocations of third party pipelines that connect with our pipelines and facilities;

the effectiveness of risk-management policies and procedures and the ability of our marketing counterparties to satisfy their financial commitments and the nonpayment or nonperformance by its customers;

the availability and cost of capital and our ability to access certain capital sources;

changes in laws and regulations to which we are subject, including tax, environmental, transportation and employment regulations;

the costs and effects of legal and administrative proceedings;

the ability to successfully identify and consummate strategic acquisitions at purchase prices that are accretive to the our financial results; and

risks associated with the construction of new pipelines and treating and processing facilities or additions to our existing pipelines and facilities.

These factors are not necessarily all of the important factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed in any of our forward-looking statements. Our future results will depend upon various other risks and uncertainties, including, but not limited to, those detailed in our other filings with the SEC. For additional information, please read our other current filings with the SEC under the Exchange Act

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

and the Securities Act. Other unknown or unpredictable factors also could have material adverse effects on our future results. You should not put undue reliance on any future-looking statements. When considering forward-looking statements, please review the risk factors described under Risk Factors beginning on page 2 of this prospectus.

### **USE OF PROCEEDS**

Except as otherwise provided in the applicable prospectus supplement, we will use the net proceeds we receive from the sale of the common units to pay all or a portion of indebtedness outstanding at the time and to acquire assets as suitable opportunities arise.

---

**Table of Contents**

**DESCRIPTION OF UNITS**

We currently have outstanding common units, class C units, class E units and class F units. Set forth below is a description of the relative rights and preferences of holders of these classes of units as specified in our partnership agreement, a copy of which is filed as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part. For a description of the relative rights and preferences of holders of units and our general partner in and to cash distributions, see Cash Distribution Policy. For a general discussion of the expected federal income tax consequences of owning and disposing of common units, see Material Tax Considerations. References in this Description of Units to we, us and our mean Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.

**Common Units**

Our common units are registered under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 and are listed for trading on the New York Stock Exchange (the NYSE). Each holder of a common unit is entitled to one vote per unit on all matters presented to the limited partners for a vote. In addition, if at any time any person or group (other than our general partner and its affiliates) owns beneficially 20% or more of all common units, any common units owned by that person or group may not be voted on any matter and are not considered to be outstanding when sending notices of a meeting of unitholders (unless otherwise required by law), calculating required votes, determining the presence of a quorum or for other similar purposes under our partnership agreement. The common units are entitled to distributions of available cash as described below under Cash Distribution Policy.

As of February 28, 2006, we had 108,055,561 common units outstanding, of which 72,416,868 were held by the public, 33,843,690 were held by ETE, the owner of our general partner, or its affiliates, 1,308 were held by FHM Investments, L.L.C. and 1,793,695 were held by our officers and directors. As of such date, the common units represent an aggregate 98.0% limited partner interest. Our general partner owns an aggregate 2.0% general partner interest in us.

**Class C Units**

As of February 28, 2006, we had 1,000,000 class C units outstanding, all of which are held by FHS Investments, L.L.C. In conjunction with a transaction involving a change of control of our general partner in August 2000, we issued 1,000,000 newly created class C units to Heritage Holdings in conversion of that portion of its incentive distribution rights that entitled it to receive any distribution attributable to the net amount received by us in connection with the settlement, judgment, award or other final nonappealable resolution of specified litigation filed by us prior to the transaction with our general partner, which we refer to as the SCANA litigation. The class C units have a zero initial capital account balance and were distributed by Heritage Holdings to its former stockholders in connection with the transaction with our general partner. Thus, our general partner will not receive any distributions made with respect to the SCANA litigation.

On October 21, 2004, we announced that we received a favorable jury verdict with respect to the SCANA litigation. The jury found in favor of us on all four claims against SCANA, awarding a total of \$48 million in actual and punitive damages. Currently, a number of post-trial motions have yet to be decided by the court. SCANA has appealed the jury's decision, and currently the parties are involved in the appeal of a number of post-trial motions. We cannot predict whether the final judgment will affirm the jury verdict without any modification or whether any appeal of the final judgment by SCANA will be successful. As a result, we cannot yet predict whether we will receive any of the damages award covered by this verdict. All decisions of our general partner relating to the SCANA litigation are determined by a special litigation committee consisting of one or more independent directors of our general partner. As soon as practicable after the time that we receive any final cash payment as a result of the resolution of the SCANA litigation, the special litigation committee will determine the aggregate net amount of these proceeds distributable by us by deducting from the amounts received all costs and expenses incurred by us and our affiliates in connection with the SCANA litigation and any cash reserves necessary or appropriate to provide for operating expenditures. Until the special litigation committee decides to make this distribution, none of the distributable proceeds will be deemed to be available cash under our partnership agreement. Please read Cash Distribution Policy below for a discussion of available cash.

When the special litigation committee decides to distribute the distributable proceeds, the amount of the distribution will be deemed to be available cash and will be distributed as described below under Cash Distribution

---

**Table of Contents**

Policy. The amount of distributable proceeds that would be distributed to holders of incentive distribution rights will instead be distributed to the holders of the class C units, pro rata. We cannot predict whether we will receive any cash payments as a result of the SCANA litigation and, if so, when these distributions might be received.

The class C units do not have any rights to share in any of our assets or distributions upon dissolution and liquidation of our partnership, except to the extent that any such distributions consist of proceeds from the SCANA litigation to which the class C unitholders would have otherwise been entitled. The class C units do not have the privilege of conversion into any other unit and do not have any voting rights except to the extent provided by law, in which case the class C units will be entitled to one vote.

The amount of cash distributions to which the incentive distribution rights are entitled was not increased by the creation of the class C units; rather, the class C units are a mechanism for dividing the incentive distribution rights that Heritage Holdings and its former stockholders would have been entitled to.

**Class E Units**

In conjunction with our purchase of the capital stock of Heritage Holdings in January 2004, the 4,426,916 common units held by Heritage Holdings were converted into 4,426,916 class E units. Pursuant to our two-for-one unit split completed on March 15, 2005, there are currently 8,853,832 Class E Units outstanding, all of which are owned by Heritage Holdings. The class E units generally do not have any voting rights. These class E units are entitled to aggregate cash distributions equal to 11.1% of the total amount of cash distributed to all unitholders, including the class E unitholders, up to \$1.41 per unit per year. Management plans to leave the class E units in the form described here indefinitely. In the event of our termination and liquidation, the class E units will be allocated 1% of any gain upon liquidation and will be allocated any loss upon liquidation to the same extent as the common units. After the allocation of such amounts, the class E units will be entitled to the balance in their capital accounts, as adjusted for such termination and liquidation. The terms of the class E units were determined in order to provide us with the opportunity to minimize the impact to us of our ownership of Heritage Holdings, including the deferred tax liabilities of Heritage Holdings that we inherited in connection with our purchase of Heritage Holdings. The class E units are treated as treasury stock for accounting purposes because they are owned by our wholly-owned subsidiary, Heritage Holdings. Due to the ownership of the class E units by this corporate subsidiary, the payment of distributions on the class E units will result in annual tax payments by Heritage Holdings at corporate federal income tax rates, which tax payments will reduce the amount of cash that would otherwise be available for distribution to us, as the owners of Heritage Holdings. Because distributions on the class E units will be available to us as the owner of Heritage Holdings, those funds will be available, after payment of taxes, for our general partnership purposes, including to satisfy working capital requirements, for the repayment of outstanding debt and to make distributions to our unitholders. Because the class E units are not entitled to receive any allocation of our income, gain, loss, deduction or credit that is attributable to our ownership of Heritage Holdings, such amounts will instead be allocated to our general partner in accordance with its respective interest and the remainder to all unitholders other than the holders of class E units pro rata. In the event that our distributions exceed \$1.41 per unit annually, all such amounts in excess thereof will be available for distribution to unitholders other than the holders of class E units in proportion to their respective interests.

**Class F Units**

As of February 28, 2006, we had 2,570,150 Class F units outstanding, all of which are held by ETE. Each Class F unit will initially be entitled to receive 100% of the quarterly cash distribution paid in respect of each of our common units; provided that the Class F units will be subordinated to our common units with respect to the payment of the minimum quarterly distribution for such quarter (in an amount equal to \$0.25 per quarter) and any arrearages with respect to the payment of the minimum quarterly distribution for all prior quarters subsequent to the issuance of the Class F units. We will be required to submit to a vote of our unitholders, as promptly as practicable following the issuance of the Class F units, a proposal to change the terms of the Class F units in order to provide that the Class F units will be convertible into our common units, on a one-for-one basis, immediately following the approval by our unitholders of such change in the terms of the Class F units. Holders of the Class F units will not be entitled to vote upon the proposal to change the terms of the Class F units but otherwise will be entitled to the same voting rights as our common units, and the Class F units will vote with our common units as a single class on each matter with respect to which our common units are entitled to vote. If our unitholders do not approve the proposal to change the terms of the Class F units within six months following the issuance of the Class F units, then each Class F unit will be entitled to receive 115% of the quarterly amount distributed by us in respect of each of our common units on a pari passu basis with distributions on our common units.

## **Table of Contents**

Upon our dissolution and liquidation, each Class F unit will initially be entitled to receive 100% of the amount distributed on each of our common units, but only after each of our common units has received an amount equal to its capital account, plus the minimum quarterly distribution for the quarter in which the liquidation occurs, plus any arrearages in the minimum quarterly distribution with respect to prior quarters. If, however, our unitholders do not approve the proposal to change the terms of the Class F units to make them convertible into our common units, then each Class F unit will be entitled upon liquidation to receive 115% of the amount distributed in respect of each of our common units on a pari passu basis with liquidating distributions on our common units.

### **Issuance of Additional Securities**

Our partnership agreement authorizes us to issue an unlimited number of additional partnership securities and rights to buy partnership securities for the consideration and on the terms and conditions established by our general partner in its sole discretion, without the approval of the unitholders. Any such additional partnership securities may be senior to the common units.

It is possible that we will fund acquisitions through the issuance of additional common units or other equity securities. Holders of any additional common units we issue will be entitled to share equally with the then-existing holders of common units in our distributions of available cash. In addition, the issuance of additional partnership interests may dilute the value of the interests of the then-existing holders of common units in our net assets.

In accordance with Delaware law and the provisions of our partnership agreement, we may also issue additional partnership securities that, in the sole discretion of the general partner, have special voting rights to which the common units are not entitled.

Upon issuance of additional partnership securities, our general partner will be required to make additional capital contributions to the extent necessary to maintain its 2.0% general partner interest in us. Moreover, our general partner will have the right, which it may from time to time assign in whole or in part to any of its affiliates, to purchase common units or other equity securities whenever, and on the same terms that, we issue those securities to persons other than the general partner and its affiliates, to the extent necessary to maintain its percentage interest, including its interest represented by common units, that existed immediately prior to each issuance. The holders of common units will not have preemptive rights to acquire additional common units or other partnership securities.

### **Unitholder Approval**

The following matters require the approval of the majority of the outstanding common units, including the common units owned by the general partner and its affiliates:

a merger of our partnership;

a sale or exchange of all or substantially all of our assets;

dissolution or reconstitution of our partnership upon dissolution;

certain amendments to the partnership agreement;

the transfer to another person of our general partner interest before June 30, 2006 or the incentive distribution rights at any time, except for transfers to affiliates of the general partner or transfers in connection with the general partner's merger or consolidation with or into, or sale of all or substantially all of its assets to, another person; and

the withdrawal of the general partner prior to June 30, 2006 in a manner that would cause the dissolution of our partnership.





## **Table of Contents**

The removal of our general partner requires the approval of not less than 66<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>% of all outstanding units, including units held by our general partner and its affiliates. Any removal is subject to the election of a successor general partner by the holders of a majority of the outstanding common units, including units held by our general partner and its affiliates.

### **Amendments to Our Partnership Agreement**

Amendments to our partnership agreement may be proposed only by our general partner. Certain amendments require the approval of a majority of the outstanding common units, including common units owned by the general partner and its affiliates. Any amendment that materially and adversely affects the rights or preferences of any class of partnership interests in relation to other classes of partnership interests will require the approval of at least a majority of the class of partnership interests so affected. Our general partner may make amendments to the partnership agreement without unitholder approval to reflect:

a change in our name, the location of our principal place of business or our registered agent or office;

the admission, substitution, withdrawal or removal of partners;

a change to qualify or continue our qualification as a limited partnership or a partnership in which the limited partners have limited liability or to ensure that neither we nor our operating partnership will be treated as an association taxable as a corporation or otherwise taxed as an entity for federal income tax purposes;

a change that does not affect our unitholders in any material respect;

a change to (i) satisfy any requirements, conditions or guidelines contained in any opinion, directive, order, ruling or regulation of any federal or state agency or judicial authority or contained in any federal or state statute, (ii) facilitate the trading of common units or comply with any rule, regulation, guideline or requirement of any national securities exchange on which the common units are or will be listed for trading, (iii) that is necessary or advisable in connection with action taken by our general partner with respect to subdivision and combination of our securities or (iv) that is required to effect the intent expressed in our partnership agreement;

a change in our fiscal year or taxable year and any changes that are necessary or advisable as a result of a change in our fiscal year or taxable year;

an amendment that is necessary to prevent us, or our general partner or its directors, officers, trustees or agents from being subjected to the provisions of the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended, the Investment Advisors Act of 1940, as amended, or plan asset regulations adopted under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended;

an amendment that is necessary or advisable in connection with the authorization or issuance of any class or series of our securities;

any amendment expressly permitted in our partnership agreement to be made by our general partner acting alone;

an amendment effected, necessitated or contemplated by a merger agreement approved in accordance with our partnership agreement;

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

an amendment that is necessary or advisable to reflect, account for and deal with appropriately our formation of, or investment in, any corporation, partnership, joint venture, limited liability company or other entity other than our operating partnership, in connection with our conduct of activities permitted by our partnership agreement;

a merger or conveyance to effect a change in our legal form; or

any other amendment substantially similar to the foregoing.

## **Table of Contents**

### **Withdrawal or Removal of Our General Partner**

Our general partner has agreed not to withdraw voluntarily as our general partner prior to June 30, 2006 without obtaining the approval of the holders of a majority of our outstanding common units, excluding those held by our general partner and its affiliates, and furnishing an opinion of counsel stating that such withdrawal (following the selection of the successor general partner) would not result in the loss of the limited liability of any of our limited partners or of the limited partner of our operating partnership or cause us or our operating partnership to be treated as an association taxable as a corporation or otherwise to be taxed as an entity for federal income tax purposes (to the extent not previously treated as such).

On or after June 30, 2006, our general partner may withdraw as general partner without first obtaining approval of any unitholder by giving 90 days' written notice, and that withdrawal will not constitute a violation of our partnership agreement. In addition, our general partner may withdraw without unitholder approval upon 90 days' notice to our limited partners if at least 50% of our outstanding common units are held or controlled by one person and its affiliates other than our general partner and its affiliates.

Upon the voluntary withdrawal of our general partner, the holders of a majority of our outstanding common units, excluding the common units held by the withdrawing general partner and its affiliates, may elect a successor to the withdrawing general partner. If a successor is not elected, or is elected but an opinion of counsel regarding limited liability and tax matters cannot be obtained, we will be dissolved, wound up and liquidated, unless within 90 days after that withdrawal, the holders of a majority of our outstanding units, excluding the common units held by the withdrawing general partner and its affiliates, agree to continue our business and to appoint a successor general partner. Our general partner may not be removed unless that removal is approved by the vote of the holders of not less than two-thirds of our outstanding units, including units held by our general partner and its affiliates, and we receive an opinion of counsel regarding limited liability and tax matters. Any removal of this kind is also subject to the approval of a successor general partner by the vote of the holders of the majority of our outstanding common units, including those held by our general partner and its affiliates.

While our partnership agreement limits the ability of our general partner to withdraw, it allows the general partner interest to be transferred to an affiliate or to a third party in conjunction with a merger or sale of all or substantially all of the assets of our general partner. In addition, our partnership agreement expressly permits the sale, in whole or in part, of the ownership of our general partner. Our general partner may also transfer, in whole or in part, any common units it owns.

### **Liquidation and Distribution of Proceeds**

Upon our dissolution, unless we are reconstituted and continue as a new limited partnership, the person authorized to wind up our affairs (the liquidator) will, acting with all the powers of our general partner that the liquidator deems necessary or desirable in its good faith judgment, liquidate our assets. The proceeds of the liquidation will be applied as follows:

first, towards the payment of all of our creditors and the creation of a reserve for contingent liabilities; and

then, to all partners in accordance with the positive balance in their respective capital accounts.

Under some circumstances and subject to some limitations, the liquidator may defer liquidation or distribution of our assets for a reasonable period of time. If the liquidator determines that a sale would be impractical or would cause a loss to our partners, our general partner may distribute assets in kind to our partners.

### **Limited Call Right**

If at any time less than 20% of the outstanding common units of any class are held by persons other than our general partner and its affiliates, our general partner will have the right to acquire all, but not less than all, of those common units at a price no less than their then-current market price. As a consequence, a unitholder may be required to sell his common units at an undesirable time or price. Our general partner may assign this purchase right to any of its affiliates or us.

## **Table of Contents**

### **Indemnification**

Under our partnership agreement, in most circumstances, we will indemnify our general partner, its affiliates and their officers and directors to the fullest extent permitted by law, from and against all losses, claims or damages any of them may suffer by reason of their status as general partner, officer or director, as long as the person seeking indemnity acted in good faith and in a manner believed to be in or not opposed to our best interest. Any indemnification under these provisions will only be out of our assets. Our general partner shall not be personally liable for, or have any obligation to contribute or loan funds or assets to us to effectuate any indemnification. We are authorized to purchase insurance against liabilities asserted against and expenses incurred by persons for our activities, regardless of whether we would have the power to indemnify the person against liabilities under our partnership agreement.

### **Listing**

Our outstanding common units are listed on the NYSE under the symbol ETP. Any additional common units we issue also will be listed on the NYSE.

### **Transfer Agent and Registrar**

The transfer agent and registrar for the common units is American Stock Transfer & Trust Company.

### **Transfer of Common Units**

Each purchaser of common units offered by this prospectus must execute a transfer application. By executing and delivering a transfer application, the purchaser of common units:

becomes the record holder of the common units and is an assignee until admitted into our partnership as a substituted limited partner;

automatically requests admission as a substituted limited partner in our partnership;

agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions of, and executes, our partnership agreement;

represents that such person has the capacity, power and authority to enter into the partnership agreement;

grants to our general partner the power of attorney to execute and file documents required for our existence and qualification as a limited partnership, the amendment of the partnership agreement, our dissolution and liquidation, the admission, withdrawal, removal or substitution of partners, the issuance of additional partnership securities and any merger or consolidation of the partnership.

makes the consents and waivers contained in the partnership agreement, including the waiver of the fiduciary duties of the general partner to unitholders as described in Risk Factors Risks Inherent in an Investment in Us Our partnership agreement limits our general partner's fiduciary duties to our unitholders and restricts the remedies available to unitholders for actions taken by our general partner that might otherwise constitute breaches of fiduciary duty.

An assignee will become a substituted limited partner of our partnership for the transferred common units upon the consent of our general partner and the recording of the name of the assignee on our books and records. Although the general partner has no current intention of doing so, it may withhold its consent in its sole discretion. An assignee who is not admitted as a limited partner will remain an assignee. An assignee is entitled to an interest equivalent to that of a limited partner for the right to share in allocations and distributions from us, including liquidating distributions. Furthermore, our general partner will vote and exercise other powers attributable to common units owned by an assignee at the written direction of the assignee.



## **Table of Contents**

Transfer applications may be completed, executed and delivered by a purchaser's broker, agent or nominee. We are entitled to treat the nominee holder of a common unit as the absolute owner. In that case, the beneficial holders' rights are limited solely to those that it has against the nominee holder as a result of any agreement between the beneficial owner and the nominee holder.

Common units are securities and are transferable according to the laws governing transfer of securities. In addition to other rights acquired, the purchaser has the right to request admission as a substituted limited partner in our partnership for the purchased common units. A purchaser of common units who does not execute and deliver a transfer application obtains only:

the right to assign the common unit to a purchaser or transferee; and

the right to transfer the right to seek admission as a substituted limited partner in our partnership for the purchased common units.

Thus, a purchaser of common units who does not execute and deliver a transfer application:

will not receive cash distributions or federal income tax allocations, unless the common units are held in a nominee or street name account and the nominee or broker has executed and delivered a transfer application; and

may not receive some federal income tax information or reports furnished to record holders of common units.

Until a common unit has been transferred on our books, we and the transfer agent, notwithstanding any notice to the contrary, may treat the record holder of the unit as the absolute owner for all purposes, except as otherwise required by law or NYSE regulations.

### **Status as Limited Partner or Assignee**

Except as described under Limited Liability, the common units will be fully paid, and the unitholders will not be required to make additional capital contributions to us.

### **Limited Liability**

Assuming that a limited partner does not participate in the control of our business within the meaning of the Delaware Revised Uniform Limited Partnership Act (the Delaware Act) and that he otherwise acts in conformity with the provisions of our partnership agreement, his liability under the Delaware Act will be limited, subject to possible exceptions, to the amount of capital he is obligated to contribute to us for his common units plus his share of any undistributed profits and assets. If it were determined, however, that the right or exercise of the right by the limited partners as a group:

to remove or replace the general partner;

to approve some amendments to our partnership agreement; or

to take other action under our partnership agreement;

constituted participation in the control of our business for the purposes of the Delaware Act, then the limited partners could be held personally liable for our obligations under Delaware law, to the same extent as the general partner. This liability would extend to persons who transact business with us and who reasonably believe that the limited partner is a general partner. Neither our partnership agreement nor the Delaware Act specifically provides for legal recourse against our general partner if a limited partner were to lose limited liability through any fault of the

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

general partner. While this does not mean that a limited partner could not seek legal recourse, we have found no precedent for this type of a claim in Delaware case law.

**Table of Contents**

Under the Delaware Act, a limited partnership may not make a distribution to a partner if after the distribution all liabilities of the limited partnership, other than liabilities to partners on account of their partnership interests and liabilities for which the recourse of creditors is limited to specific property of our partnership, exceed the fair value of the assets of the limited partnership. For the purpose of determining the fair value of the assets of a limited partnership, the Delaware Act provides that the fair value of property subject to liability for which recourse of creditors is limited shall be included in the assets of the limited partnership only to the extent that the fair value of that property exceeds the nonrecourse liability. The Delaware Act provides that a limited partner who receives a distribution and knew at the time of the distribution that the distribution was in violation of the Delaware Act shall be liable to the limited partnership for the amount of the distribution for three years. Under the Delaware Act, an assignee who becomes a substituted limited partner of a limited partnership is liable for the obligations of his assignor to make contributions to our partnership, except the assignee is not obligated for liabilities unknown to him at the time he became a limited partner and which could not be ascertained from our partnership agreement.

Our subsidiaries currently conduct business in 34 states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming. To maintain the limited liability for Energy Transfer Partners, L.P., as the holder of a 100% limited partner interest in Heritage Operating, L.P., we may be required to comply with legal requirements in the jurisdictions in which Heritage Operating, L.P. conducts business, including qualifying our subsidiaries to do business there. Limitations on the liability of limited partners for the obligations of a limited partnership have not been clearly established in many jurisdictions. If it were determined that we were, by virtue of our limited partner interest in Heritage Operating, L.P. or otherwise, conducting business in any state without compliance with the applicable limited partnership statute, or that our right or the exercise of our right to remove or replace Heritage Operating, L.P.'s general partner, to approve some amendments to Heritage Operating, L.P.'s partnership agreement, or to take other action under Heritage Operating, L.P.'s partnership agreement constituted participation in the control of Heritage Operating, L.P.'s business for purposes of the statutes of any relevant jurisdiction, then we could be held personally liable for Heritage Operating, L.P.'s obligations under the law of that jurisdiction to the same extent as our general partner under the circumstances. We will operate in a manner as our general partner considers reasonable and necessary or appropriate to preserve our limited liability.

**Meetings; Voting**

Except as described below regarding a person or group owning 20% or more of any class of units then outstanding, unitholders or assignees who are record holders of units on the record date will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at, meetings of our limited partners and to act upon matters for which approvals may be solicited. Common units that are owned by an assignee who is a record holder, but who has not yet been admitted as a limited partner, shall be voted by our general partner at the written direction of the record holder. Absent direction of this kind, the common units will not be voted, except that, in the case of common units held by our general partner on behalf of non-citizen assignees, our general partner shall distribute the votes on those common units in the same ratios as the votes of limited partners on other units are cast.

Our general partner does not anticipate that any meeting of unitholders will be called in the foreseeable future. Any action that is required or permitted to be taken by the unitholders may be taken either at a meeting of the unitholders or without a meeting if consents in writing describing the action so taken are signed by holders of the number of units as would be necessary to authorize or take that action at a meeting. Meetings of the unitholders may be called by our general partner or by unitholders owning at least 20% of the outstanding units of the class for which a meeting is proposed. Unitholders may vote either in person or by proxy at meetings. The holders of a majority of the outstanding units of the class or classes for which a meeting has been called represented in person or by proxy shall constitute a quorum unless any action by the unitholders requires approval by holders of a greater percentage of the units, in which case the quorum shall be the greater percentage.

Each record holder of a unit has a vote according to his percentage interest in us, although additional limited partner interests having special voting rights could be issued. However, if at any time any person or group, other than our general partner and its affiliates, owns, in the aggregate, beneficial ownership of 20% or more of the common units then outstanding, the person or group will lose voting rights on all of its common units and its common units may not be voted on any matter and will not be considered to be outstanding when sending notices of



## **Table of Contents**

a meeting of unitholders, calculating required votes, determining the presence of a quorum or for other similar purposes. Common units held in nominee or street name account will be voted by the broker or other nominee in accordance with the instruction of the beneficial owner unless the arrangement between the beneficial owner and his nominee provides otherwise.

Any notice, demand, request, report or proxy material required or permitted to be given or made to record holders of common units under our partnership agreement will be delivered to the record holder by us or by the transfer agent.

## **Books and Reports**

Our general partner is required to keep appropriate books of our business at our principal offices. The books will be maintained for both tax and financial reporting purposes on an accrual basis. Reporting for tax purposes is done on a calendar year basis.

We will furnish or make available to record holders of common units, within 75 days after the close of each fiscal year, an annual report containing audited financial statements and a report on those financial statements by our independent public accountants. Except for our fourth quarter, we will also furnish or make available summary financial information within 45 days after the close of each quarter.

We will furnish each record holder of a unit with information reasonably required for tax reporting purposes within 90 days after the close of each calendar year. This information is expected to be furnished in summary form so that some complex calculations normally required of partners can be avoided. Our ability to furnish this summary information to unitholders will depend on the cooperation of unitholders in supplying us with specific information. Every unitholder will receive information to assist him in determining his federal and state tax liability and filing his federal and state income tax returns, regardless of whether he supplies us with information.

Our partnership agreement provides that a limited partner can, for a purpose reasonably related to his interest as a limited partner, upon reasonable demand and at his own expense, have furnished to him:

a current list of the name and last known address of each partner;

a copy of our tax returns;

information as to the amount of cash, and a description and statement of the agreed value of any other property or services, contributed or to be contributed by each partner and the date on which each became a partner;

copies of our partnership agreement, the certificate of limited partnership of the partnership, related amendments and powers of attorney under which they have been executed;

information regarding the status of our business and financial condition; and

any other information regarding our affairs as is just and reasonable.

Our general partner may, and intends to, keep confidential from the limited partners trade secrets or other information the disclosure of which our general partner believes in good faith is not in our best interests or that we are required by law or by agreements with third parties to keep confidential.

**Table of Contents**

**CASH DISTRIBUTION POLICY**

**Distributions of Available Cash**

References in this Cash Distribution Policy to we, us and our mean Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.

*General.* We will distribute all of our available cash to our unitholders and our general partner within 45 days following the end of each fiscal quarter.

*Definition of Available Cash.* Available cash is defined in our partnership agreement and generally means, with respect to any calendar quarter, all cash on hand at the end of such quarter:

less the amount of cash reserves that are necessary or appropriate in the reasonable discretion of the general partner to:

provide for the proper conduct of our business;

comply with applicable law or any debt instrument or other agreement (including reserves for future capital expenditures and for our future credit needs); or

provide funds for distributions to unitholders and our general partner in respect of any one or more of the next four quarters;

plus all cash on hand on the date of determination of available cash for the quarter resulting from working capital borrowings made after the end of the quarter. Working capital borrowings are generally borrowings that are made under our credit facilities and in all cases are used solely for working capital purposes or to pay distributions to partners.

**Operating Surplus and Capital Surplus**

*General.* All cash distributed to unitholders will be characterized as either operating surplus or capital surplus. We distribute available cash from operating surplus differently than available cash from capital surplus.

*Definition of Operating Surplus.* Operating surplus for any period generally means:

our cash balance on the closing date of our initial public offering; plus

\$10.0 million (as described below); plus

all of our cash receipts since the closing of our initial public offering, excluding cash from interim capital transactions such as borrowings that are not working capital borrowings, sales of equity and debt securities and sales or other dispositions of assets outside the ordinary course of business; plus

working capital borrowings made after the end of a quarter but before the date of determination of operating surplus for the quarter; less

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

all of our operating expenditures after the closing of our initial public offering, including the repayment of working capital borrowings, but not the repayment of other borrowings, and including maintenance capital expenditures; less

the amount of cash reserves that the general partner deems necessary or advisable to provide funds for future operating expenditures.

*Definition of Capital Surplus.* Generally, capital surplus will be generated only by:

borrowings other than working capital borrowings;

sales of debt and equity securities; and

sales or other disposition of assets for cash, other than inventory, accounts receivable and other current assets sold in the ordinary course of business or as part of normal retirements or replacements of assets.

## **Table of Contents**

*Characterization of Cash Distributions.* We will treat all available cash distributed as coming from operating surplus until the sum of all available cash distributed since we began operations equals the operating surplus as of the most recent date of determination of available cash. We will treat any amount distributed in excess of operating surplus, regardless of its source, as capital surplus. As reflected above, operating surplus includes \$10.0 million in addition to our cash balance on the closing date of our initial public offering, cash receipts from our operations and cash from working capital borrowings. This amount does not reflect actual cash on hand that is available for distribution to our unitholders. Rather, it is a provision that will enable us, if we choose, to distribute as operating surplus up to \$10.0 million of cash we receive in the future from non-operating sources, such as asset sales, issuances of securities, and long-term borrowings, that would otherwise be distributed as capital surplus. We have not made, and we anticipate that we will not make, any distributions from capital surplus.

### **Incentive Distribution Rights**

Incentive distribution rights represent the contractual right to receive an increasing percentage of quarterly distributions of available cash from operating surplus after the minimum quarterly distribution as been paid. Please read *Distributions of Available Cash from Operating Surplus* below. The general partner owns all of the incentive distribution rights, except that in conjunction with the August 2000 transaction with U.S. Propane, L.P., we issued 1,000,000 class C units to Heritage Holdings, Inc., our general partner at that time, in conversion of that portion of Heritage Holdings, Inc.'s incentive distribution rights that entitled it to receive any distribution made by us of funds attributable to the net amount received by us in connection with the settlement, judgment, award or other final nonappealable resolution of the SCANA litigation. In January 2004, the class C units were distributed by Heritage Holdings, Inc. to the owners of its equity interests, and, as a result, neither we nor any of our subsidiaries own any of the outstanding class C units. Any amount payable on the class C units in the future will reduce the amount otherwise distributable to holders of incentive distribution rights at the time the distribution of such litigation proceeds is made and will not reduce the amount distributable to holders of common units. No payments to date have been made on the class C units.

### **Distributions of Available Cash from Operating Surplus**

We will make distributions of available cash from operating surplus for any quarter in the following manner:

First, 98% to all common and class E unitholders, in accordance with their percentage interests, and 2% to the general partner, until each common unit has received \$0.25 per unit for such quarter (the *minimum quarterly distribution*);

Second, 98% to all common and class E unitholders, in accordance with their percentage interests, and 2% to the general partner, until each common unit has received \$0.275 per unit for such quarter (the *first target distribution*);

Third, 85% to all common and class E unitholders, in accordance with their percentage interests, 13% to the holders of incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until each common unit has received \$0.3175 per unit for such quarter (the *second target distribution*);

Fourth, 75% to all common and class E unitholders, in accordance with their percentage interests, 23% to the holders of incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until each common unit has received \$0.4125 per unit for such quarter (the *third target distribution*); and

Fifth, thereafter, 50% to all common and class E unitholders, in accordance with their percentage interests, 48% to the holders of incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the distributions on each class E unit may not exceed \$1.41 per year. Please read *Description of Units* for a discussion of the class C units and the percentage interests in distributions of the different classes of units and *Cash Distribution Policy* for a more detailed description of our cash distribution policy.

---

## **Table of Contents**

### **Distributions of Available Cash from Capital Surplus**

We will make distributions of available cash from capital surplus, if any, in the following manner:

First, 98% to all unitholders, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until we distribute for each common unit, an amount of available cash from capital surplus equal to the initial public offering price;

Thereafter, we will make all distributions of available cash from capital surplus as if they were from operating surplus. Our partnership agreement treats a distribution of capital surplus as the repayment of the initial unit price from the initial public offering, which is a return of capital. The initial public offering price less any distributions of capital surplus per unit is referred to as the unrecovered capital. Each time a distribution of capital surplus is made, the minimum quarterly distribution and the target distribution levels will be reduced in the same proportion as the corresponding reduction in the unrecovered capital. Because distributions of capital surplus will reduce the minimum quarterly distribution, after any of these distributions are made, it may be easier for the general partner to receive incentive distributions. However, any distribution of capital surplus before the unrecovered capital is reduced to zero cannot be applied to the payment of the minimum quarterly distribution.

Once we distribute capital surplus on a unit in an amount equal to the initial unit price, we will reduce the minimum quarterly distribution and the target distribution levels to zero. We will then make all future distributions from operating surplus, with 50% being paid to the holders of units, 48% to the holders of the incentive distribution rights and 2% to the general partner.

### **Adjustment to the Minimum Quarterly Distribution and Target Distribution Levels**

In addition to adjusting the minimum quarterly distribution and target distribution levels to reflect a distribution of capital surplus, if we combine our units into fewer units or subdivide our units into a greater number of units, we will proportionately adjust:

the minimum quarterly distribution;

the target distribution levels; and

unrecovered capital.

For example, if a two-for-one split of the common units should occur, the minimum quarterly distribution, the target distribution levels and the unrecovered capital would each be reduced to 50% of its initial level. We will not make any adjustment by reason of the issuance of additional units for cash or property.

On January 14, 2005, our general partner announced a two-for-one split of our common units that was effected on March 15, 2005. As a result, the minimum quarterly distribution and the target distribution levels were reduced to 50% of their initial levels. The adjusted minimum quarterly distribution and the adjusted target distribution levels are reflected in the discussion above under the caption Distributions of Available Cash from Operating Surplus.

In addition, if legislation is enacted or if existing law is modified or interpreted in a manner that causes us to become taxable as a corporation or otherwise subject to taxation as an entity for federal, state or local income tax purposes, we will reduce the minimum quarterly distribution and the target distribution levels by multiplying the same by one minus the sum of the highest marginal federal corporate income tax rate that could apply and any increase in the effective overall state and local income tax rates.

The total amount of distributions declared for the year ended August 31, 2005 on common units, class E units, general partner interests and the incentive distribution rights totaled \$190.4 million, \$12.5 million, \$4.9 million, and \$38.5 million, respectively. All such distributions were made from available cash from operating surplus.



## **Table of Contents**

### **Distributions of Cash Upon Liquidation**

*General.* If we dissolve in accordance with our partnership agreement, we will sell or otherwise dispose of our assets in a process called liquidation. We will first apply the proceeds of liquidation to the payment of our creditors. We will distribute any remaining proceeds to the unitholders and the general partner, in accordance with their capital account balances, as adjusted to reflect any gain or loss upon the sale or other disposition of our assets in liquidation.

Any further net gain recognized upon liquidation will be allocated in a manner that takes into account the incentive distribution rights of the general partner.

*Manner of Adjustments for Gain.* The manner of the adjustment for gain is set forth in our partnership agreement in the following manner:

First, to the general partner and the holders of units who have negative balances in their capital accounts to the extent of and in proportion to those negative balances;

Second, 98% to the common unitholders, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until the capital account for each common unit is equal to the sum of:

the unrecovered capital; and

the amount of the minimum quarterly distribution for the quarter during which our liquidation occurs;

Third, 98% to all unitholders, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until we allocate under this paragraph an amount per unit equal to:

the sum of the excess of the first target distribution per unit over the minimum quarterly distribution per unit for each quarter of our existence; less

the cumulative amount per unit of any distributions of available cash from operating surplus in excess of the minimum quarterly distribution per unit that we distributed 98% to the unitholders, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, for each quarter of our existence;

Fourth, 85% to all unitholders, pro rata, 13% to the holders of the incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until we allocate under this paragraph an amount per unit equal to:

the sum of the excess of the second target distribution per unit over the first target distribution per unit for each quarter of our existence; less

the cumulative amount per unit of any distributions of available cash from operating surplus in excess of the first target distribution per unit that we distributed 85% to the unitholders, pro rata, 13% to the holders of the incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner for each quarter of our existence;

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

Fifth, 75% to all unitholders, pro rata, 23% to the holders of the incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner, until we allocate under this paragraph an amount per unit equal to:

the sum of the excess of the third target distribution per unit over the second target distribution per unit for each quarter of our existence; less

the cumulative amount per unit of any distributions of available cash from operating surplus in excess of the second target distribution per unit that we distributed 75% to the unitholders, pro rata, 23% to the holders of the incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner for each quarter of our existence; and

Sixth, thereafter, 50% to all unitholders, pro rata, 48% to the holders of the incentive distribution rights, pro rata, and 2% to the general partner.



**Table of Contents**

*Manner of Adjustments for Losses.* Upon our liquidation, we will generally allocate any loss to the general partner and the unitholders in the following manner:

First, 98% to the holders of common units in proportion to the positive balances in their capital accounts and 2% to the general partner, until the capital accounts of the common unitholders have been reduced to zero; and

Second, thereafter, 100% to the general partner.

*Adjustments to Capital Accounts upon the Issuance of Additional Units.* We will make adjustments to capital accounts upon the issuance of additional units. In doing so, we will allocate any unrealized and, for tax purposes, unrecognized gain or loss resulting from the adjustments to the unitholders and the general partner in the same manner as we allocate gain or loss upon liquidation. In the event that we make positive adjustments to the capital accounts upon the issuance of additional units, we will allocate any later negative adjustments to the capital accounts resulting from the issuance of additional units or upon our liquidation in a manner which results, to the extent possible, in the general partner's capital account balances equaling the amount which they would have been if no earlier positive adjustments to the capital accounts had been made.

---

**Table of Contents**

**MATERIAL TAX CONSIDERATIONS**

This section is a summary of the material tax consequences that may be relevant to prospective unitholders who are individual citizens or residents of the United States and, unless otherwise noted in the following discussion, is the opinion of Vinson & Elkins L.L.P., counsel to our general partner and us, insofar as it relates to matters of United States federal income tax law and legal conclusions with respect to those matters. This section is based upon current provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, existing and proposed regulations and current administrative rulings and court decisions, all of which are subject to change. Later changes in these authorities may cause the tax consequences to vary substantially from the consequences described below. Unless the context otherwise requires, references in this section to us or we are references to Energy Transfer Partners, L.P.

No attempt has been made in this section to comment on all federal income tax matters affecting us or the unitholders. Moreover, the discussion focuses on unitholders who are individual citizens or residents of the United States and has only limited application to corporations, estates, trusts, nonresident aliens or other unitholders subject to specialized tax treatment, such as tax-exempt institutions, foreign persons, individual retirement accounts (IRAs), real estate investment trusts (REITs) or mutual funds. Accordingly, we recommend that you consult, and depend on, your own tax advisor in analyzing the federal, state, local and foreign tax consequences particular to you of an investment in, or the disposition of, our securities.

All statements as to matters of law and legal conclusions, but not as to factual matters, contained in this section, unless otherwise noted, are the opinion of counsel, and some are based on the accuracy of the representations we make.

No ruling has been or will be requested from the IRS regarding any matter affecting us or prospective unitholders. An opinion of counsel represents only that counsel's best legal judgment and does not bind the IRS or the courts. Accordingly, the opinions and statements made here may not be sustained by a court if contested by the IRS. Any contest of this sort with the IRS may materially and adversely impact the market for the common units and the prices at which common units trade. In addition, the costs of any contest with the IRS will be borne directly or indirectly by the unitholders and the general partner. Furthermore, the tax treatment of us or of an investment in us, may be significantly modified by future legislative or administrative changes or court decisions. Any modifications may or may not be retroactively applied.

For the reasons described below, counsel has not rendered an opinion with respect to the following specific federal income tax issues:

- (a) the treatment of a unitholder whose common units are loaned to a short seller to cover a short sale of common units (please read Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership Treatment of Short Sales );
- (b) whether our monthly convention for allocating taxable income and losses is permitted by existing Treasury Regulations (please read Disposition of Common Units Allocations Between Transferors and Transferees ); and
- (c) whether our method for depreciating Section 743 adjustments is sustainable (please read Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership Section 754 Election ).

**Partnership Status**

A partnership is not a taxable entity and incurs no federal income tax liability. Instead, each partner of a partnership is required to take into account his allocable share of items of income, gain, loss and deduction of the partnership in computing his federal income tax liability, regardless of whether cash distributions are made to him by the partnership. Distributions of cash by a partnership to a partner generally are not taxable unless the amount of cash distributed is in excess of the partner's adjusted basis in his partnership interest.

No ruling has been or will be sought from the IRS and the IRS has made no determination as to the status of Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. as a partnership for federal income tax purposes or whether our operations generate qualifying income under Section 7704 of the Code, or any other matter affecting our prospective unitholders.

---

## **Table of Contents**

Instead, we have relied on the opinion of Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. that, based upon the Internal Revenue Code, its regulations, published revenue rulings and court decisions and the representations described below, Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. has been, is, and will continue to be, classified as a partnership for federal income tax purposes.

In rendering its opinion, Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. has relied on factual representations made by us and our general partner. The representations made by us and our general partner upon which counsel has relied are:

- (a) Neither we nor our operating partnerships have elected or will elect to be treated as a corporation;
- (b) Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. and our operating partnerships have been and will be operated in accordance with applicable partnership statutes, the applicable partnership agreement and in the manner described in this prospectus; and
- (c) For each taxable year, more than 90% of our gross income has been and will be income that Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. has opined or will opine is qualifying income within the meaning of Section 7704(d) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Section 7704 of the Internal Revenue Code provides that publicly-traded partnerships will, as a general rule, be taxed as corporations. However, an exception, referred to as the Qualifying Income Exception, exists with respect to publicly-traded partnerships of which 90% or more of the gross income for every taxable year consists of qualifying income. Qualifying income includes income and gains derived from the processing, transportation and marketing of crude oil, natural gas and products thereof, including the retail and wholesale marketing of propane, certain hedging activities and the transportation of propane and natural gas liquids. Other types of qualifying income include interest other than from a financial business, dividends, gains from the sale of real property and gains from the sale or other disposition of assets held for the production of income that otherwise constitutes qualifying income. We estimate that less than six percent of our current gross income is not qualifying income; however, this estimate could change from time to time. Based upon and subject to this estimate, the factual representations made by us and the general partner and a review of the applicable legal authorities, Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. is of the opinion that at least 90% of our current gross income constitutes qualifying income.

If we fail to meet the Qualifying Income Exception, other than a failure that is determined by the IRS to be inadvertent and that is cured within a reasonable time after discovery, we will be treated as if we had transferred all of our assets, subject to liabilities, to a newly formed corporation, on the first day of the year in which we fail to meet the Qualifying Income Exception, in return for stock in that corporation, and then distributed that stock to the unitholders in liquidation of their interests in us. This contribution and liquidation should be tax-free to unitholders and us so long as we, at that time, do not have liabilities in excess of the tax basis of our assets. Thereafter, we would be treated as a corporation for federal income tax purposes.

If we were treated as an association taxable as a corporation in any taxable year, either as a result of a failure to meet the Qualifying Income Exception or otherwise, our items of income, gain, loss and deduction would be reflected only on our separate tax returns rather than being passed through to the unitholders, and our net income would be taxed to us at corporate rates. In addition, any distribution made to a unitholder would be treated as either taxable dividend income, to the extent of our current or accumulated earnings and profits, or, in the absence of earnings and profits, a nontaxable return of capital, to the extent of the unitholder's tax basis in his common units, or taxable capital gain, after the unitholder's tax basis in his common units is reduced to zero. Accordingly, taxation as a corporation would result in a material reduction in a unitholder's cash flow and after-tax return and thus would likely result in a substantial reduction of the value of the units.

The remainder of this section is based on Vinson & Elkins L.L.P.'s opinion that Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. and our operating partnerships will be classified as partnerships for federal income tax purposes.

### **Limited Partner Status**

Unitholders who have become limited partners of Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. will be treated as partners of Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. for federal income tax purposes. Also:

- (a) assignees who have executed and delivered transfer applications, and are awaiting admission as limited partners, and

---

## **Table of Contents**

(b) unitholders whose common units are held in street name or by a nominee and who have the right to direct the nominee in the exercise of all substantive rights attendant to the ownership of their common units

will be treated as partners of Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. for federal income tax purposes. As there is no direct authority addressing assignees of common units who are entitled to execute and deliver transfer applications and become entitled to direct the exercise of attendant rights, but who fail to execute and deliver transfer applications, counsel's opinion does not extend to these persons. Furthermore, a purchaser or other transferee of common units who does not execute and deliver a transfer application may not receive some federal income tax information or reports furnished to record holders of common units unless the common units are held in a nominee or street name account and the nominee or broker has executed and delivered a transfer application for those common units.

A beneficial owner of common units whose units have been transferred to a short seller to complete a short sale would appear to lose his status as a partner with respect to those units for federal income tax purposes. Please read Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership Treatment of Short Sales.

Income, gain, deductions or losses would not appear to be reportable by a unitholder who is not a partner for federal income tax purposes, and any cash distributions received by a unitholder who is not a partner for federal income tax purposes would therefore be fully taxable as ordinary income. These holders should consult their own tax advisors with respect to their status as partners in Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. for federal income tax purposes.

### **Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership**

*Flow-Through of Taxable Income.* We will not pay any federal income tax. Instead, each unitholder will be required to report on his income tax return his allocable share of our income, gains, losses and deductions without regard to whether corresponding cash distributions are received by him. Consequently, we may allocate income to a unitholder even if he has not received a cash distribution. Each unitholder will be required to include in income his allocable share of our income, gains, losses and deductions for our taxable year ending with or within his taxable year.

*Treatment of Distributions.* Our distributions to a unitholder generally will not be taxable to the unitholder for federal income tax purposes to the extent of his tax basis in his common units immediately before the distribution. Our cash distributions in excess of a unitholder's tax basis generally will be considered to be gain from the sale or exchange of the common units, taxable in accordance with the rules described under

Disposition of Common Units below. Any reduction in a unitholder's share of our liabilities for which no partner, including the general partner, bears the economic risk of loss, known as nonrecourse liabilities, will be treated as a distribution of cash to that unitholder. To the extent our distributions cause a unitholder's at risk amount to be less than zero at the end of any taxable year, he must recapture any losses deducted in previous years that are equal to the amount of that shortfall. Please read Limitations on Deductibility of Losses.

A decrease in a unitholder's percentage interest in us because of our issuance of additional common units will decrease his share of our nonrecourse liabilities, and thus will result in a corresponding deemed distribution of cash. A non-pro rata distribution of money or property may result in ordinary income to a unitholder, regardless of his tax basis in his common units, if that distribution reduces the unitholder's share of our unrealized receivables, including depreciation recapture, and/or substantially appreciated inventory items, both as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, and collectively, Section 751 Assets.

To that extent, he will be treated as having been distributed his proportionate share of the Section 751 Assets and having exchanged those assets with us in return for the non-pro rata portion of the actual distribution made to him. This latter deemed exchange generally will result in the unitholder's realization of ordinary income. That income will equal the excess of (1) the non-pro rata portion of that distribution over (2) the unitholder's tax basis for the share of Section 751 Assets deemed relinquished in the exchange.

*Basis of Common Units.* A unitholder's initial tax basis for his common units will be the amount he paid for the common units plus his share of our nonrecourse liabilities. That basis will be increased by his share of our income

**Table of Contents**

and by any increases in his share of our nonrecourse liabilities. That basis will be decreased, but not below zero, by distributions from us, by the unitholder's share of our losses, by any decreases in his share of our nonrecourse liabilities and by his share of our expenditures that are not deductible in computing taxable income and are not required to be capitalized. A limited partner will have no share of our debt which is recourse to the general partner, but will have a share, generally based on his share of profits, of our nonrecourse liabilities. Please read *Disposition of Common Units* *Recognition of Gain or Loss*.

*Limitations on Deductibility of Losses.* The deduction by a unitholder of his share of our losses will be limited to the tax basis in his units and, in the case of an individual unitholder or a corporate unitholder that is subject to the at risk rules (for example, if more than 50% of the value of the corporate unitholder's stock is owned directly or indirectly by five or fewer individuals or some tax-exempt organizations), to the amount for which the unitholder is considered to be at risk with respect to our activities, if that is less than his tax basis. A unitholder must recapture losses deducted in previous years to the extent that distributions cause his at risk amount to be less than zero at the end of any taxable year. Losses disallowed to a unitholder or recaptured as a result of these limitations will carry forward and will be allowable to the extent that his tax basis or at risk amount, whichever is the limiting factor, is subsequently increased. Upon the taxable disposition of a common unit, any gain recognized by a unitholder can be offset by losses that were previously suspended by the at risk limitation but may not be offset by losses suspended by the basis limitation. Any excess loss above that gain previously suspended by the at risk or basis limitations is no longer utilizable.

In general, a unitholder will be at risk to the extent of the tax basis of his common units, excluding any portion of that basis attributable to his share of our nonrecourse liabilities, reduced by any amount of money he borrows to acquire or hold his common units, if the lender of those borrowed funds owns an interest in us, is related to the unitholder or can look only to the units for repayment. A unitholder's at risk amount will increase or decrease as the tax basis of the unitholder's common units increases or decreases, other than tax basis increases or decreases attributable to increases or decreases in his share of our nonrecourse liabilities.

The passive loss limitations generally provide that individuals, estates, trusts and some closely-held corporations and personal service corporations can deduct losses from passive activities, which are generally activities in which the taxpayer does not materially participate, only to the extent of the taxpayer's income from those passive activities. The passive loss limitations are applied separately with respect to each publicly-traded partnership. Consequently, any losses we generate will only be available to offset our passive income generated in the future and will not be available to offset income from other passive activities or investments, including our investments or investments in other publicly-traded partnerships, or salary or active business income. Passive losses that are not deductible because they exceed a unitholder's share of income we generate may be deducted in full when he disposes of his entire investment in us in a fully taxable transaction with an unrelated party. The passive activity loss rules are applied after other applicable limitations on deductions, including the at risk rules and the basis limitation.

A unitholder's share of our net income may be offset by any suspended passive losses, but it may not be offset by any other current or carryover losses from other passive activities, including those attributable to other publicly-traded partnerships.

*Limitations on Interest Deductions.* The deductibility of a non-corporate taxpayer's investment interest expense is generally limited to the amount of that taxpayer's net investment income. The IRS has indicated that net passive income from a publicly-traded partnership constitutes investment income for purposes of the limitations on the deductibility of investment interest. In addition, the unitholder's share of our portfolio income will be treated as investment income. Investment interest expense includes:

- (a) interest on indebtedness properly allocable to property held for investment;
- (b) our interest expense attributed to portfolio income; and
- (c) the portion of interest expense incurred to purchase or carry an interest in a passive activity to the extent attributable to portfolio income.

**Table of Contents**

The computation of a unitholder's investment interest expense will take into account interest on any margin account borrowing or other loan incurred to purchase or carry a unit. Net investment income includes gross income from property held for investment and amounts treated as portfolio income under the passive loss rules, less deductible expenses, other than interest, directly connected with the production of investment income, but generally does not include gains attributable to the disposition of property held for investment.

*Entity-Level Collections.* If we are required or elect under applicable law to pay any federal, state or local income tax on behalf of any unitholder or the general partner or any former unitholder, we are authorized to pay those taxes from our funds. That payment, if made, will be treated as a distribution of cash to the partner on whose behalf the payment was made. If the payment is made on behalf of a person whose identity cannot be determined, we are authorized to treat the payment as a distribution to all current unitholders. We are authorized to amend the partnership agreement in the manner necessary to maintain uniformity of intrinsic tax characteristics of units and to adjust later distributions, so that after giving effect to these distributions, the priority and characterization of distributions otherwise applicable under the partnership agreement is maintained as nearly as is practicable. Payments by us as described above could give rise to an overpayment of tax on behalf of an individual partner in which event the partner would be required to file a claim in order to obtain a credit or refund.

*Allocation of Income, Gain, Loss and Deduction.* In general, if we have a net profit, our items of income, gain, loss and deduction will be allocated among the general partner and the unitholders in accordance with their percentage interests in us. At any time that incentive distributions are made to the general partner, gross income will be allocated to the general partner to the extent of these distributions. If we have a net loss for the entire year, that loss will be allocated first to the general partner and the unitholders in accordance with their percentage interests in us to the extent of their positive capital accounts and, second, to the general partner.

Specified items of our income, gain, loss and deduction will be allocated to account for the difference between the tax basis and fair market value of our assets at the time of an offering, referred to in this discussion as *Contributed Property*. The effect of these allocations to a unitholder purchasing common units in our offering will be essentially the same as if the tax basis of our assets were equal to their fair market value at the time of the offering. In addition, items of recapture income will be allocated to the extent possible to the partner who was allocated the deduction giving rise to the treatment of that gain as recapture income in order to minimize the recognition of ordinary income by some unitholders. Finally, although we do not expect that our operations will result in the creation of negative capital accounts, if negative capital accounts nevertheless result, items of our income and gain will be allocated in an amount and manner to eliminate the negative balance as quickly as possible.

An allocation of items of our income, gain, loss or deduction, other than an allocation required by the Internal Revenue Code to eliminate the difference between a partner's book capital account, credited with the fair market value of *Contributed Property*, and tax capital account, credited with the tax basis of *Contributed Property*, referred to in this discussion as the *Book-Tax Disparity*, will generally be given effect for federal income tax purposes in determining a partner's share of an item of income, gain, loss or deduction only if the allocation has substantial economic effect. In any other case, a partner's share of an item will be determined on the basis of his interest in us, which will be determined by taking into account all the facts and circumstances, including his relative contributions to us, the interests of all the partners in profits and losses, the interest of all the partners in cash flow and other nonliquidating distributions and rights of all the partners to distributions of capital upon liquidation.

Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. is of the opinion that, with the exception of the issues described in *Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership Section 754 Election* and *Disposition of Common Units Allocations Between Transferors and Transferees*, allocations under our partnership agreement will be given effect for federal income tax purposes in determining a partner's share of an item of income, gain, loss or deduction.

*Treatment of Short Sales.* A unitholder whose units are loaned to a short seller to cover a short sale of units may be considered as having disposed of those units. If so, he would no longer be a partner for those units during the period of the loan and may recognize gain or loss from the disposition. As a result, during this period:

- (a) any of our income, gain, loss or deduction with respect to those units would not be reportable by the unitholder;
- (b) any cash distributions received by the unitholder as to those units would be fully taxable; and

**Table of Contents**

(c) all of these distributions would appear to be ordinary income.

Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. has not rendered an opinion regarding the treatment of a unitholder where common units are loaned to a short seller to cover a short sale of common units; therefore, unitholders desiring to assure their status as partners and avoid the risk of gain recognition from a loan to a short seller should modify any applicable brokerage account agreements to prohibit their brokers from borrowing their units. The IRS has announced that it is actively studying issues relating to the tax treatment of short sales of partnership interests. Please also read [Disposition of Common Units Recognition of Gain or Loss](#).

*Alternative Minimum Tax.* Each unitholder will be required to take into account his distributive share of any items of our income, gain, loss or deduction for purposes of the alternative minimum tax. The current minimum tax rate for noncorporate taxpayers is 26% on the first \$175,000 of alternative minimum taxable income in excess of the exemption amount and 28% on any additional alternative minimum taxable income. Prospective unitholders should consult with their tax advisors as to the impact of an investment in units on their liability for the alternative minimum tax.

*Tax Rates.* In general, the highest effective United States federal income tax rate for individuals currently is 35% and the maximum United States federal income tax rate for net capital gains of an individual is 15% if the asset disposed of was held for more than 12 months at the time of disposition.

*Section 754 Election.* We have made the election permitted by Section 754 of the Internal Revenue Code. That election is irrevocable without the consent of the IRS. The election will generally permit us to adjust a common unit purchaser's tax basis in our assets (inside basis) under Section 743(b) of the Internal Revenue Code to reflect his purchase price. This election does not apply to a person who purchases common units directly from us. The Section 743(b) adjustment belongs to the purchaser and not to other partners. For purposes of this discussion, a partner's inside basis in our assets will be considered to have two components: (1) his share of our tax basis in our assets (common basis) and (2) his Section 743(b) adjustment to that basis.

Treasury Regulations under Section 743 of the Internal Revenue Code require, if the remedial allocation method is adopted (which we have adopted), a portion of the Section 743(b) adjustment attributable to recovery property to be depreciated over the remaining cost recovery period for the Section 704(c) built-in gain. Under Treasury Regulation Section 1.167(c)-1(a)(6), a Section 743(b) adjustment attributable to property subject to depreciation under Section 167 of the Internal Revenue Code rather than cost recovery deductions under Section 168 is generally required to be depreciated using either the straight-line method or the 150% declining balance method. Under our partnership agreement, the general partner is authorized to take a position to preserve the uniformity of units even if that position is not consistent with these Treasury Regulations. Please read [Uniformity of Units](#).

Although Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. is unable to opine as to the validity of this approach because there is no controlling authority on this issue, we intend to depreciate the portion of a Section 743(b) adjustment attributable to unrealized appreciation in the value of Contributed Property, to the extent of any unamortized Book-Tax Disparity, using a rate of depreciation or amortization derived from the depreciation or amortization method and useful life applied to the common basis of the property, or treat that portion as non-amortizable to the extent attributable to property the common basis of which is not amortizable. This method is consistent with the regulations under Section 743 but is arguably inconsistent with Treasury Regulation Section 1.167(c)-1(a)(6), which is not expected to directly apply to a material portion of our assets. To the extent this Section 743(b) adjustment is attributable to appreciation in value in excess of the unamortized Book-Tax Disparity, we will apply the rules described in the Treasury Regulations and legislative history. If we determine that this position cannot reasonably be taken, we may take a depreciation or amortization position under which all purchasers acquiring units in the same month would receive depreciation or amortization, whether attributable to common basis or a Section 743(b) adjustment, based upon the same applicable rate as if they had purchased a direct interest in our assets. This kind of aggregate approach may result in lower annual depreciation or amortization deductions than would otherwise be allowable to some unitholders. Please read [Uniformity of Units](#).

A Section 754 election is advantageous if the transferee's tax basis in his units is higher than the units' share of the aggregate tax basis of our assets immediately prior to the transfer. In that case, as a result of the election, the transferee would have, among other items, a greater amount of depreciation and depletion deductions and his share of any gain on a sale of our assets would be less. Conversely, a Section 754 election is disadvantageous if the

## **Table of Contents**

transferee's tax basis in his units is lower than those units' share of the aggregate tax basis of our assets immediately prior to the transfer. Thus, the fair market value of the units may be affected either favorably or unfavorably by the election.

The calculations involved in the Section 754 election are complex and will be made on the basis of assumptions as to the value of our assets and other matters. For example, the allocation of the Section 743(b) adjustment among our assets must be made in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code. The IRS could seek to reallocate some or all of any Section 743(b) adjustment we allocated to our tangible assets to goodwill instead. Goodwill, as an intangible asset, is generally amortizable over a longer period of time or under a less accelerated method than our tangible assets. We cannot assure you that the determinations we make will not be successfully challenged by the IRS and that the deductions resulting from them will not be reduced or disallowed altogether. Should the IRS require a different basis adjustment to be made, and should, in our opinion, the expense of compliance exceed the benefit of the election, we may seek permission from the IRS to revoke our Section 754 election. If permission is granted, a subsequent purchaser of units may be allocated more income than he would have been allocated had the election not been revoked.

## **Tax Treatment of Operations**

*Accounting Method and Taxable Year.* We use the year ending December 31 as our taxable year and the accrual method of accounting for federal income tax purposes. Each unitholder will be required to include in income his share of our income, gain, loss and deduction for our taxable year ending within or with his taxable year.

*Tax Basis, Depreciation and Amortization.* The tax basis of our assets will be used for purposes of computing depreciation and cost recovery deductions and, ultimately, gain or loss on the disposition of these assets. The federal income tax burden associated with the difference between the fair market value of our assets and their tax basis immediately prior to an offering will be borne by the general partner, its affiliates and our other unitholders as of that time. Please read "Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership" Allocation of Income, Gain, Loss and Deduction.

To the extent allowable, we may elect to use the depreciation and cost recovery methods that will result in the largest deductions being taken in the early years after assets are placed in service. We are not entitled to any amortization deductions with respect to any goodwill conveyed to us on formation. Property we subsequently acquire or construct may be depreciated using accelerated methods permitted by the Internal Revenue Code.

If we dispose of depreciable property by sale, foreclosure, or otherwise, all or a portion of any gain, determined by reference to the amount of depreciation previously deducted and the nature of the property, may be subject to the recapture rules and taxed as ordinary income rather than capital gain. Similarly, a partner who has taken cost recovery or depreciation deductions with respect to property we own will likely be required to recapture some or all of those deductions as ordinary income upon a sale of his interest in us. Please read "Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership" Allocation of Income, Gain, Loss and Deduction and "Disposition of Common Units" Recognition of Gain or Loss.

The costs incurred in selling our units (called "syndication expenses") must be capitalized and cannot be deducted currently, ratably or upon our termination. There are uncertainties regarding the classification of costs as organization expenses, which we may amortize, and as syndication expenses, which we may not amortize. The underwriting discounts and commissions we incur will be treated as syndication expenses.

*Valuation and Tax Basis of Our Properties.* The federal income tax consequences of the ownership and disposition of units will depend in part on our estimates of the relative fair market values, and the initial tax bases, of our assets. Although we may from time to time consult with professional appraisers regarding valuation matters, we will make many of the relative fair market value estimates ourselves. These estimates of basis are subject to challenge and will not be binding on the IRS or the courts. If the estimates of fair market value or basis are later found to be incorrect, the character and amount of items of income, gain, loss or deductions previously reported by unitholders might change, and unitholders might be required to adjust their tax liability for prior years and incur interest and penalties with respect to those adjustments.



---

## **Table of Contents**

### **Disposition of Common Units**

*Recognition of Gain or Loss.* Gain or loss will be recognized on a sale of units equal to the difference between the amount realized and the unitholder's tax basis for the units sold. A unitholder's amount realized will be measured by the sum of the cash or the fair market value of other property he receives plus his share of our nonrecourse liabilities. Because the amount realized includes a unitholder's share of our nonrecourse liabilities, the gain recognized on the sale of units could result in a tax liability in excess of any cash received from the sale.

Prior distributions from us in excess of cumulative net taxable income for a common unit that decreased a unitholder's tax basis in that common unit will, in effect, become taxable income if the common unit is sold at a price greater than the unitholder's tax basis in that common unit, even if the price received is less than his original cost.

Except as noted below, gain or loss recognized by a unitholder, other than a dealer in units, on the sale or exchange of a unit held for more than one year will generally be taxable as capital gain or loss. Capital gain recognized by an individual on the sale of units held more than 12 months will generally be taxed at a maximum rate of 15%. A portion of this gain or loss, which will likely be substantial, however, will be separately computed and taxed as ordinary income or loss under Section 751 of the Internal Revenue Code to the extent attributable to assets giving rise to depreciation recapture or other unrealized receivables or to inventory items we own. The term unrealized receivables includes potential recapture items, including depreciation recapture. Ordinary income attributable to unrealized receivables, inventory items and depreciation recapture may exceed net taxable gain realized upon the sale of a unit and may be recognized even if there is a net taxable loss realized on the sale of a unit. Thus, a unitholder may recognize both ordinary income and a capital loss upon a sale of units. Net capital loss may offset capital gains and no more than \$3,000 of ordinary income, in the case of individuals, and may only be used to offset capital gain in the case of corporations.

The IRS has ruled that a partner who acquires interests in a partnership in separate transactions must combine those interests and maintain a single adjusted tax basis for all those interests. Upon a sale or other disposition of less than all of those interests, a portion of that tax basis must be allocated to the interests sold using an equitable apportionment method. Treasury Regulations allow a selling unitholder who can identify common units transferred with an ascertainable holding period to elect to use the actual holding period of the common units transferred. Thus, according to the ruling, a common unitholder will be unable to select high or low basis common units to sell as would be the case with corporate stock, but, according to the regulations, may designate specific common units sold for purposes of determining the holding period of units transferred. A unitholder electing to use the actual holding period of common units transferred must consistently use that identification method for all subsequent sales or exchanges of common units. A unitholder considering the purchase of additional units or a sale of common units purchased in separate transactions should consult his tax advisor as to the possible consequences of this ruling and application of the Treasury Regulations.

Specific provisions of the Internal Revenue Code affect the taxation of some financial products and securities, including partnership interests, by treating a taxpayer as having sold an appreciated partnership interest, one in which gain would be recognized if it were sold, assigned or terminated at its fair market value, if the taxpayer or related persons enter(s) into:

- (a) a short sale;
- (b) an offsetting notional principal contract; or
- (c) a futures or forward contract with respect to the partnership interest or substantially identical property.

Moreover, if a taxpayer has previously entered into a short sale, an offsetting notional principal contract or a futures or forward contract with respect to the partnership interest, the taxpayer will be treated as having sold that position if the taxpayer or a related person then acquires the partnership interest or substantially identical property. The Secretary of Treasury is also authorized to issue regulations that treat a taxpayer that enters into transactions or positions that have substantially the same effect as the preceding transactions as having constructively sold the financial position.

## **Table of Contents**

*Allocations Between Transferors and Transferees.* In general, our taxable income and losses will be determined annually, will be prorated on a monthly basis and will be subsequently apportioned among the unitholders in proportion to the number of units owned by each of them as of the opening of the applicable exchange on the first business day of the month (the Allocation Date). However, gain or loss realized on a sale or other disposition of our assets other than in the ordinary course of business will be allocated among the unitholders on the Allocation Date in the month in which that gain or loss is recognized. As a result, a unitholder transferring units may be allocated income, gain, loss and deduction realized after the date of transfer.

The use of this method may not be permitted under existing Treasury Regulations. Accordingly, Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. is unable to opine on the validity of this method of allocating income and deductions between unitholders. If this method is not allowed under the Treasury Regulations, or only applies to transfers of less than all of the unitholder's interest, our taxable income or losses might be reallocated among the unitholders. We are authorized to revise our method of allocation between unitholders to conform to a method permitted under future Treasury Regulations.

A unitholder who owns units at any time during a quarter and who disposes of them prior to the record date set for a cash distribution for that quarter will be allocated items of our income, gain, loss and deductions attributable to that quarter but will not be entitled to receive that cash distribution.

*Notification Requirements.* A unitholder who sells any of his units, other than through a broker, generally is required to notify us in writing of that sale within 30 days after the sale (or, if earlier, January 15 of the year following the sale). A purchaser of units from another unitholder is required to notify us in writing of that purchase within 30 days after the purchase. We are required to notify the IRS of that transaction and to furnish specified information to the transferor and transferee. However, these reporting requirements do not apply to a sale by an individual who is a citizen of the United States and who effects the sale or exchange through a broker. Additionally, a transferor and a transferee of a unit will be required to furnish statements to the IRS, filed with their income tax returns for the taxable year in which the sale or exchange occurred, that describe the amount of the consideration received for the unit that is allocated to our goodwill or going concern value.

*Constructive Termination.* We will be considered to have been terminated for tax purposes if there is a sale or exchange of 50% or more of the total interests in our capital and profits within a 12-month period. A constructive termination results in the closing of our taxable year for all unitholders. We would be required to make new tax elections after a termination, including a new election under Section 754 of the Internal Revenue Code, and a termination would result in a deferral of our deductions for depreciation. A termination could also result in penalties if we were unable to determine that the termination had occurred. Moreover, a termination might either accelerate the application of, or subject us to, any tax legislation enacted before the termination.

### **Uniformity of Units**

Because we cannot match transferors and transferees of units, we must maintain uniformity of the economic and tax characteristics of the units to a purchaser of these units. In the absence of uniformity, we may be unable to completely comply with a number of federal income tax requirements, both statutory and regulatory. A lack of uniformity can result from a literal application of Treasury Regulation Section 1.167(c)-1(a)(6). Any non-uniformity could have a negative impact on the value of the units. Please read Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership Section 754 Election.

We intend to depreciate the portion of a Section 743(b) adjustment attributable to unrealized appreciation in the value of Contributed Property, to the extent of any unamortized Book-Tax Disparity, using a rate of depreciation or amortization derived from the depreciation or amortization method and useful life applied to the common basis of that property, or treat that portion as nonamortizable, to the extent attributable to property the common basis of which is not amortizable, consistent with the regulations under Section 743, even though that position may be inconsistent with Treasury Regulation Section 1.167(c)-1(a)(6) which is not expected to directly apply to a material portion of our assets. Please read Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership Section 754 Election. To the extent that the Section 743(b) adjustment is attributable to appreciation in value in excess of the unamortized Book-Tax Disparity, we will apply the rules described in the Treasury Regulations and legislative history. If we determine that this position cannot reasonably be taken, we may adopt a depreciation and amortization position under which all purchasers acquiring units in the same month would receive depreciation and amortization deductions, whether

**Table of Contents**

attributable to a common basis or Section 743(b) adjustment, based upon the same applicable rate as if they had purchased a direct interest in our property. If this position is adopted, it may result in lower annual depreciation and amortization deductions than would otherwise be allowable to some unitholders and risk the loss of depreciation and amortization deductions not taken in the year that these deductions are otherwise allowable. This position will not be adopted if we determine that the loss of depreciation and amortization deductions will have a material adverse effect on the unitholders. If we choose not to utilize this aggregate method, we may use any other reasonable depreciation and amortization method to preserve the uniformity of the intrinsic tax characteristics of any units that would not have a material adverse effect on the unitholders. The IRS may challenge any method of depreciating the Section 743(b) adjustment described in this paragraph. If this challenge were sustained, the uniformity of units might be affected, and the gain from the sale of units might be increased without the benefit of additional deductions. Please read [Disposition of Common Units](#) [Recognition of Gain or Loss](#).

**Tax-Exempt Organizations and Other Investors**

Ownership of units by employee benefit plans, other tax-exempt organizations, non-resident aliens, foreign corporations, other foreign persons raises issues unique to those investors and, as described below, may have substantially adverse tax consequences to them.

Employee benefit plans and most other organizations exempt from federal income tax, including individual retirement accounts and other retirement plans, are subject to federal income tax on unrelated business taxable income. Virtually all of our income allocated to a unitholder which is a tax-exempt organization will be unrelated business taxable income and will be taxable to them.

Non-resident aliens and foreign corporations, trusts or estates that own units will be considered to be engaged in business in the United States because of the ownership of units. As a consequence they will be required to file federal tax returns to report their share of our income, gain, loss or deduction and pay federal income tax at regular rates on their share of our net income or gain. And, under rules applicable to publicly traded partnerships, we will withhold tax, at the highest applicable rate, from cash distributions made quarterly to foreign unitholders. Each foreign unitholder must obtain a taxpayer identification number from the IRS and submit that number to our transfer agent on a Form W-8 BEN or applicable substitute form in order to obtain credit for these withholding taxes.

In addition, because a foreign corporation that owns units will be treated as engaged in a United States trade or business, that corporation may be subject to the United States branch profits tax at a rate of 30%, in addition to regular federal income tax, on its share of our income and gain, as adjusted for changes in the foreign corporation's U.S. net equity, which are effectively connected with the conduct of a United States trade or business. That tax may be reduced or eliminated by an income tax treaty between the United States and the country in which the foreign corporate unitholder is a qualified resident. In addition, this type of unitholder is subject to special information reporting requirements under Section 6038C of the Internal Revenue Code.

Under a ruling of the IRS, a foreign unitholder who sells or otherwise disposes of a unit will be subject to federal income tax on gain realized on the sale or disposition of that unit to the extent that this gain is effectively connected with a United States trade or business of the foreign unitholder. Apart from the ruling, a foreign unitholder will not be taxed or subject to withholding upon the sale or disposition of a unit if he has owned less than 5% in value of the units during the five-year period ending on the date of the disposition and if the units are regularly traded on an established securities market at the time of the sale or disposition.

**Administrative Matters**

*Information Returns and Audit Procedures.* We intend to furnish to each unitholder, within 90 days after the close of each calendar year, specific tax information, including a Schedule K-1, which describes his share of our income, gain, loss and deduction for our preceding taxable year. In preparing this information, which will not be reviewed by counsel, we will take various accounting and reporting positions, some of which have been mentioned earlier, to determine his share of income, gain, loss and deduction. We cannot assure you that those positions will yield a result that conforms to the requirements of the Internal Revenue Code, regulations or administrative interpretations of the IRS. Neither we nor counsel can assure prospective unitholders that the IRS will not successfully contend in court that those positions are impermissible. Any challenge by the IRS could negatively affect the value of the units.

---

**Table of Contents**

The IRS may audit our federal income tax information returns. Adjustments resulting from an IRS audit may require each unitholder to adjust a prior year's tax liability, and possibly may result in an audit of his own return. Any audit of a unitholder's return could result in adjustments not related to our returns as well as those related to our returns.

Partnerships generally are treated as separate entities for purposes of federal tax audits, judicial review of administrative adjustments by the IRS and tax settlement proceedings. The tax treatment of partnership items of income, gain, loss and deduction are determined in a partnership proceeding rather than in separate proceedings with the partners. The Internal Revenue Code requires that one partner be designated as the Tax Matters Partner for these purposes. The partnership agreement names the general partner as our Tax Matters Partner.

The Tax Matters Partner will make some elections on our behalf and on behalf of unitholders. In addition, the Tax Matters Partner can extend the statute of limitations for assessment of tax deficiencies against unitholders for items in our returns. The Tax Matters Partner may bind a unitholder with less than a 1% profits interest in us to a settlement with the IRS unless that unitholder elects, by filing a statement with the IRS, not to give that authority to the Tax Matters Partner. The Tax Matters Partner may seek judicial review, by which all the unitholders are bound, of a final partnership administrative adjustment and, if the Tax Matters Partner fails to seek judicial review, judicial review may be sought by any unitholder having at least a 1% interest in profits or by any group of unitholders having in the aggregate at least a 5% interest in profits. However, only one action for judicial review will go forward, and each unitholder with an interest in the outcome may participate.

A unitholder must file a statement with the IRS identifying the treatment of any item on his federal income tax return that is not consistent with the treatment of the item on our return. Intentional or negligent disregard of this consistency requirement may subject a unitholder to substantial penalties.

*Nominee Reporting.* Persons who hold an interest in us as a nominee for another person are required to furnish to us:

- (a) the name, address and taxpayer identification number of the beneficial owner and the nominee;
- (b) whether the beneficial owner is
  - (i) a person that is not a United States person,
  - (ii) a foreign government, an international organization or any wholly owned agency or instrumentality of either of the foregoing, or
  - (iii) a tax-exempt entity;
- (c) the amount and description of units held, acquired or transferred for the beneficial owner; and
- (d) specific information including the dates of acquisitions and transfers, means of acquisitions and transfers, and acquisition cost for purchases, as well as the amount of net proceeds from sales.

Brokers and financial institutions are required to furnish additional information, including whether they are United States persons and specific information on units they acquire, hold or transfer for their own account. A penalty of \$50 per failure, up to a maximum of \$100,000 per calendar year, is imposed by the Internal Revenue Code for failure to report that information to us. The nominee is required to supply the beneficial owner of the units with the information furnished to us.

*Accuracy-related Penalties.* An additional tax equal to 20% of the amount of any portion of an underpayment of tax that is attributable to one or more specified causes, including negligence or disregard of rules or regulations, substantial understatements of income tax and substantial valuation misstatements, is imposed by the Internal Revenue Code. No penalty will be imposed, however, for any portion of an underpayment if it is shown that there was a reasonable cause for that portion and that the taxpayer acted in good faith regarding that portion.

A substantial understatement of income tax in any taxable year exists if the amount of the understatement exceeds the greater of 10% of the tax required to be shown on the return for the taxable year or \$5,000. The amount

**Table of Contents**

of any understatement subject to penalty generally is reduced if any portion is attributable to a position adopted on the return:

(a) for which there is, or was, substantial authority, or

(b) as to which there is a reasonable basis and the pertinent facts of that position are disclosed on the return.

If any item of income, gain, loss or deduction included in the distributive shares of unitholders might result in that kind of an understatement of income for which no substantial authority exists, we must disclose the pertinent facts on our return. In addition, we will make a reasonable effort to furnish sufficient information for unitholders to make adequate disclosure on their returns and to take other actions as may be appropriate to permit unitholders to avoid liability for penalties. More stringent rules apply to tax shelters, which we do not believe includes us.

A substantial valuation misstatement exists if the value of any property, or the adjusted basis of any property, claimed on a tax return is 200% or more of the amount determined to be the correct amount of the valuation or adjusted basis. No penalty is imposed unless the portion of the underpayment attributable to a substantial valuation misstatement exceeds \$5,000 (\$10,000 for most corporations). If the valuation claimed on a return is 400% or more than the correct valuation, the penalty imposed increases to 40%.

*Reportable Transactions.* If we were to engage in a reportable transaction, we (and possibly you and others) would be required to make a detailed disclosure of the transaction to the IRS. A transaction may be a reportable transaction based upon any of several factors, including the fact that it is a type of tax avoidance transaction publicly identified by the IRS as a listed transaction or that it produces certain kinds of losses in excess of \$2 million. Our participation in a reportable transaction could increase the likelihood that our federal income tax information return (and possibly your tax return) would be audited by the IRS. Please read Information Returns and Audit Procedures above.

Moreover, if we were to participate in a reportable transaction with a significant purpose to avoid or evade tax, or in any listed transaction, you may be subject to the following provisions of the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004:

accuracy-related penalties with a broader scope, significantly narrower exceptions, and potentially greater amounts than described above at Accuracy-related Penalties,

for those persons otherwise entitled to deduct interest on federal tax deficiencies, nondeductibility of interest on any resulting tax liability and

in the case of a listed transaction, an extended statute of limitations.

We do not expect to engage in any reportable transactions.

*Registration as a Tax Shelter.* We registered as a tax shelter under the law in effect at the time of our initial public offering and were assigned tax shelter registration number 96234000014. **Issuance of a tax shelter registration number to us does not indicate that investment in us or the claimed tax benefits have been reviewed, examined or approved by the IRS.** The American Jobs Creation Act of 2004 (the Jobs Act) repealed the tax shelter registration rules and replaced them with a new reporting regime. However, IRS Form 8271, as revised after the Jobs Act, nevertheless requires a unitholder to continue to report our tax shelter registration number on the unitholder's tax return for any year in which the unitholder claims any deduction, loss or other benefit, or reports any income, with respect to our common units. The IRS also appears to take the position that a unitholder who sells or transfers our common units after the Jobs Act must continue to provide our tax shelter registration number to the transferee. Unitholders are urged to consult their tax advisors regarding the application of the tax shelter registration rules.

**State, Local and Other Tax Considerations**

In addition to federal income taxes, you will be subject to other taxes, including state and local income taxes, unincorporated business taxes, and estate, inheritance or intangible taxes that may be imposed by the various jurisdictions in which we do business or own property or in which you are a resident. We currently do business or own property in 33 states, most of which impose income taxes. We may also own property or do business in other states or foreign jurisdictions in the future. Although an analysis of those various taxes is not presented here, each prospective unitholder should consider their potential impact on his investment in us. You may not be required to file a return and pay taxes in some states

## Edgar Filing: Energy Transfer Partners, L.P. - Form S-3

because your income from that state falls below the filing and payment requirement. You will be required, however, to file state income tax returns and to pay state income taxes in many of the states in which we do business or own property, and you may be subject to penalties for failure to comply with those requirements. In some states, tax losses may not produce a tax benefit in the year incurred and also may not be available to offset income in subsequent taxable years. Some of the states may require us, or we may elect, to withhold a percentage of income from amounts to be distributed to a unitholder who is not a resident of the state.

**Table of Contents**

Withholding, the amount of which may be greater or less than a particular unitholder's income tax liability to the state, generally does not relieve a nonresident unitholder from the obligation to file an income tax return. Amounts withheld may be treated as if distributed to unitholders for purposes of determining the amounts distributed by us. Please read "Tax Consequences of Unit Ownership - Entity-Level Collections." Based on current law and our estimate of our future operations, the general partner anticipates that any amounts required to be withheld will not be material.

It is the responsibility of each unitholder to investigate the legal and tax consequences, under the laws of pertinent states and localities, of his investment in us. Accordingly, each prospective unitholder is urged to consult with, and depend upon, his own tax counsel or other advisor with regard to those matters. Further, it is the responsibility of each unitholder to file all state and local, as well as United States federal tax returns, that may be required of him. Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. has not rendered an opinion on the state or local tax consequences of an investment in us.

---

**Table of Contents**

**INVESTMENTS IN US BY EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLANS**

An investment in us by an employee benefit plan is subject to certain additional considerations because the investments of such plans are subject to the fiduciary responsibility and prohibited transaction provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended ( ERISA ), and restrictions imposed by Section 4975 of the Internal Revenue Code. As used herein, the term employee benefit plan includes, but is not limited to, qualified pension, profit-sharing and stock bonus plans, Keogh plans, simplified employee pension plans and tax deferred annuities or IRAs established or maintained by an employer or employee organization. Among other things, consideration should be given to (a) whether such investment is prudent under Section 404(a)(1)(B) of ERISA; (b) whether in making such investment, such plan will satisfy the diversification requirement of Section 404(a)(1)(C) of ERISA; and (c) whether such investment will result in recognition of unrelated business taxable income by such plan and, if so, the potential after-tax investment return. Please read Tax Considerations Tax-Exempt Organizations and Other Investors. The person with investment discretion with respect to the assets of an employee benefit plan (a fiduciary ) should determine whether an investment in us is authorized by the appropriate governing instrument and is a proper investment for such plan.

Section 406 of ERISA and Section 4975 of the Internal Revenue Code (which also applies to IRAs that are not considered part of an employee benefit plan) prohibit an employee benefit plan from engaging in certain transactions involving plan assets with parties that are parties in interest under ERISA or disqualified persons under the Internal Revenue Code with respect to the plan.

In addition to considering whether the purchase of limited partnership units is a prohibited transaction, a fiduciary of an employee benefit plan should consider whether such plan will, by investing in us, be deemed to own an undivided interest in our assets, with the result that our general partner also would be a fiduciary of such plan and our operations would be subject to the regulatory restrictions of ERISA, including its prohibited transaction rules, as well as the prohibited transaction rules of the Internal Revenue Code.

The Department of Labor regulations provide guidance with respect to whether the assets of an entity in which employee benefit plans acquire equity interests would be deemed plan assets under certain circumstances. Pursuant to these regulations, an entity's assets would not be considered to be plan assets if, among other things, (a) the equity interest acquired by employee benefit plans are publicly offered securities i.e., the equity interests are widely held by 100 or more investors independent of the issuer and each other, freely transferable and registered pursuant to certain provisions of the federal securities laws, (b) the entity is an Operating Partnership i.e., it is primarily engaged in the production or sale of a product or service other than the investment of capital either directly or through a majority owned subsidiary or subsidiaries, or (c) there is no significant investment by benefit plan investors, which is defined to mean that less than 25% of the value of each class of equity interest (disregarding certain interests held by our general partner, its affiliates and certain other persons) is held by the employee benefit plans referred to above, IRAs and other employee benefit plans not subject to ERISA (such as governmental plans). Our assets should not be considered plan assets under these regulations because it is expected that the investment wil