

What is the South Hillsborough Pipeline Project?

The South Hillsborough Pipeline will be approximately 26 miles of large diameter transmission main comprising two segments: Segment A and Segment B. The pipeline will range in diameter from 36 to 72 inches and will convey up to 65 million gallons per day of drinking water from Tampa Bay Water's Tampa Bay Regional Surface Water Treatment Plant in Brandon to Hillsborough County's Lithia Water Treatment facility. It will also carry water to a new Hillsborough County connection point at the intersection of Balm Riverview and Balm roads.

Why is this project needed?

The South Hillsborough Pipeline is needed to supply additional drinking water to the fast-growing southern Hillsborough County service area. Hillsborough County is experiencing unprecedented population growth that is driving the demand for additional drinking water. By 2045, the number of homes in the Boyette area is expected to grow by one-third, the number in Wimauma is expected to more than double, and the number in the Balm area is expected to nearly triple. The pipeline also provides a backup supply line to the County's Lithia Water Treatment Plant.

Who will benefit from the project?

This project will benefit residents and businesses in southern Hillsborough County. It will provide Hillsborough County utility customers sufficient water for current and future needs.

Which route was selected?

At its September 2022 meeting, Tampa Bay Water's board of directors selected the "blue" route for Segment A and considered Segment B, but deferred action to allow Hillsborough County additional time to review the route studies. In January 2023, the board approved the "blue" route for Segment B, which together with Segment A, represents the lowest consolidated cost route, estimated at \$417 million.

What routes did you consider?

Tampa Bay Water began studying potential route corridors in 2019. In 2021, Tampa Bay Water's engineering consultants evaluated a total of 10 routes, five northern segments and five southern segments, which resulted in a shortlist of three top-ranked consolidated routes.

What criteria were used to evaluate the routes?

Tampa Bay Water evaluated the routes using cost and non-cost weighting criteria. The non-cost criteria included pipeline segment length, public inconvenience, safety, special crossings and construction requirements, geotechnical considerations, permitting, right of way or easement availability, operations and maintenance access, environmental and historical impacts, and long-range planning. Under each of these main criterion headings are detailed considerations. For example, safety includes accessibility for emergency vehicles, proximity of construction to petroleum lines and high voltage overhead powerlines, safety for pedestrians and motorists, and more.

Did the public have input into the route?

Yes. Public input played a role in the evaluation criteria weighting and route ranking. In 2019, Tampa Bay Water solicited public input on alternative pipeline routes in an online survey. That survey showed that public inconvenience, environmental impacts and cost were most important to the community. In 2020, the utility conducted a public opinion survey which confirmed the public's top criteria for selecting new projects. Engineers used that input to weight the evaluation criteria that was used to determine the route ranking. Additionally, residents and businesses along the final three potential routes had the opportunity to provide input in a survey Tampa Bay Water conducted June 14-July 8, 2022. Tampa Bay Water also hosted a telephone town hall meeting July 12, 2022, and residents provided input at the utility's board meetings. While resident input favored the orange route, Tampa Bay Water's board of directors selected the lower cost blue route.

Will you hold public meetings in the future?

Yes. The project team will hold public meetings later in late summer or early fall 2024, once the 60% design is completed. Residents will be invited to future meetings by direct mail postcard. We will also post information on the project website and on Tampa Bay Water's social media channels.

What is the project schedule? When will construction start and be completed?

The pipeline's final design is scheduled to be complete in the third quarter 2025. Any properties or easements that need to be acquired will be identified and property owners will be notified by July 1, 2024. Construction is anticipated to begin as early as the fourth quarter 2025 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2028.

How will you acquire property for the pipeline route?

Engineers are currently designing the pipeline, which will determine the exact location and sizes of easements needed. If property is needed within the approved pipeline route, Tampa Bay Water or its land agents will contact the property owner by certified U.S. Mail or telephone to discuss purchasing an easement at a fair market value. An easement allows a portion of a parcel to be used for public services, such as water, sewer or storm water pipelines, or other utilities.

A property owner from whom we purchase a permanent and/or temporary easement will continue to own their property, but the rights to the land are shared with Tampa Bay Water on a permanent or temporary basis. Permanent easements are perpetual — they will remain with the property even if the property is sold or transferred. Temporary construction easements are used to provide adequate space for construction activities and access and are limited in duration. More information on easements can be found at tampabaywater.org/shp.

As a last resort, when terms of negotiation cannot be resolved, Tampa Bay Water has the authority to acquire the designated land through the power of eminent domain. Eminent domain allows local government entities and utilities to acquire private property for public use with just compensation through legal action.

Will this pipeline connect to new subdivisions?

No. This pipeline will be part of the wholesale water transmission system, not the local government retail system. Tampa Bay Water is a regional water supply authority that provides water to the six local governments it serves: Hillsborough County, Pasco County, Pinellas County, New Port Richey, St. Petersburg and Tampa. Those governments, in turn, provide water to their customers.

Will this project increase my water bill?

Tampa Bay Water may need to issue debt to cover some of the cost of Segment A, which may increase the uniform rate charged to our member governments. If so, this increase could be passed on in customer water bills. Tampa Bay Water will continue to look at different funding options, including various state and federal programs and grants, to minimize any potential debt impact on the uniform rate.

Hillsborough County is funding Segment B, which is currently estimated to cost \$66.2 million. The County's water rate covers the current construction estimate, but many factors, including any escalation in cost for Segment B, could impact future rate increases.

Is this project enabling growth?

Tampa Bay Water has no authority to control growth. We have an unequivocal obligation to meet the water demands of our customers, including Hillsborough County. As the region's water needs grow, we respond by either adding new supplies, expanding our delivery network, or both. Growth is controlled by local cities and counties.

Will there be traffic impacts? Will construction close roads?

The exact impacts will be known once the selected route is designed and permitted. Temporary road and lane closures are likely. Any detours, road or lane closures will be clearly marked and communicated to the public. Tampa Bay Water and its contractor will ensure residents, businesses, emergency services, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Department, HART and any nearby schools are notified in advance of detours and lane closures.

Will the construction affect access to homes and businesses along the construction route?

The exact impacts will be known once the selected route is designed and permitted. Once the route is fully designed and construction details are known, we will work closely with those affected to ensure access is maintained. Residents and businesses will be notified in advance of road closures and detours.

What anticipated noise disturbances are associated with this project?

Those living and working near the project site can expect to hear construction noise associated with trucks and heavy equipment. Construction is expected to take place Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., although occasional night and weekend work may be needed.

What is typically involved in pipeline construction?

Before construction begins, shallow wells will be installed and pumped continuously to dewater the areas to be excavated. Dewatering systems must run 24 hours a day until construction in an area is complete. These systems include noise-minimizing diesel pumps and a small-diameter, temporary pipeline to direct water away from the construction area so that tunnel pits and shafts can be safely built.

Crews will then use heavy equipment to excavate trenches and install trench boxes to keep crews safe while they are installing the pipe segments. After the pipe is installed, crews will backfill the trenches. If roads are disturbed during construction, temporary drivable surfaces will be placed. Once construction is complete, all disturbed roadways will be repaved and restriped. All construction areas will be restored to the same or better condition than before construction began.

What is typically involved in tunneling operations?

Tunneling requires special equipment and special construction techniques. If a tunnel boring machine is used, pits are excavated on each side of the crossing (road, river/stream, railroad), and then a tunnel boring machine is placed in one pit and tunnels to the other, installing the pipeline while simultaneously excavating.

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Will the pumping from your dewatering system lower water levels and cause a problem with my domestic or irrigation well?

Dewatering pumps are not expected to affect nearby wells for several reasons. First, construction dewatering pumps focus on the shallowest water table. The pipeline is placed approximately 10 feet below ground, so that is the depth to which water must be removed. Domestic and irrigation wells generally pump from the deeper, confined aquifer. Second, construction dewatering is focused on a particular location, pumping just enough water away to keep a trench or pit dry. It is unlikely that pumping effects from this limited activity would extend outward significantly from the construction corridor. Third, dewatering is a temporary activity that is expected to last only a short duration, usually one to two weeks, in any one area.

How do you ensure safety at the construction sites?

To ensure safety at the sites, construction areas are restricted from public access and are clearly marked with caution tape, safety fences or barricades. Each site is secured during non-working hours. Trenches will be barricaded and secured on a daily basis. Warning signs will instruct people to stay away from construction areas. Residents can help ensure safety by maintaining a safe distance from construction areas and by discouraging children or pets from approaching construction sites.

What is the cost of the South Hillsborough Pipeline?

The consolidated blue route (Segments A and B) represents the lowest cost route at an estimated cost of \$417 million. Estimated costs will be updated when Tampa Bay Water's consulting engineers complete the detailed design for the pipeline.

Tampa Bay Water has received \$4.5 million in co-funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District for preliminary design and will apply for additional funds, up to \$145 million in District co-funding for design and construction, in fiscal year 2024 and beyond. Hillsborough County will pay for Pipeline B, which is estimated to cost \$66.2 million.

How can I get more information on the project?

Information on the South Hillsborough Pipeline is available on the project website at tampabaywater.org/shp. If you would like to opt into receiving notices regarding the project, please email shpinfo@tampabaywater.org or call (813) 485-6480.