

What is the South Hillsborough Pipeline Project?

The South Hillsborough Pipeline will be approximately 25 miles of large diameter transmission main comprising two segments: Pipeline A and Pipeline B. The pipeline will range in diameter from 36 to 72 inches. The pipeline will convey regional drinking water supplies from Tampa Bay Water's regional system to Hillsborough County's Lithia Water Treatment facility and to a new County connection point at the intersection of Balm Riverview and Balm roads. The pipeline will carry up to 65 million gallons per day of new water to fast-growing southern Hillsborough County.

Why is this project needed?

The South Hillsborough Pipeline is needed to supply additional drinking water to the fast-growing southern Hillsborough 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.

What routes are you considering?

Tampa Bay Water is considering three potential routes. Each route starts at the Tampa Bay Regional Surface Water Treatment Plant in Brandon and will connect at or near the Lithia Water Treatment Plant. Then it will continue south to the intersection of Balm Riverview and Balm Roads. Route maps can be viewed at tampabaywater.org/shp.

When were the potential routes selected?

Tampa Bay Water began studying potential route corridors in 2019. In 2021, Tampa Bay Water's engineering consultants began in-depth evaluations of potential routes. Several route segments went through a vigorous evaluation process that resulted in a ranking of routes. The top three routes will be further analyzed in June and July, and the final ranking will be considered for approval by Tampa Bay Water's board of directors in August 2022.

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 will play a role in route ranking. In 2019, Tampa Bay Water solicited public input on alternative pipeline routes 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 all of the final three potential routes will have the opportunity to provide input in a survey Tampa Bay Water is conducting June 14-July 8. Tampa Bay Water will also host a telephone town hall meeting on July 12. Input received will be provided to Tampa Bay Water's board of directors for consideration when they vote on a final route in August 2022.

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

The pipeline's final design is scheduled to be complete in mid-2024, with property acquisition complete in late 2024, after which construction bidding will begin. The project is scheduled for final completion in early 2028.

How will you acquire property for the pipeline route?

Once a pipeline route is approved, the route will be refined to determine the exact location and sizes of easements needed. If property is needed within an approved pipeline route, Tampa Bay Water land agents will meet with the property owner 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 an 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 and are limited in duration.

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 governments 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?

No. This pipeline will be part of the wholesale water transmission system, not the local government retail system. It has no direct impact on your residential water bill.

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. As their water needs grow, we have to 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 a route is selected, designed and permitted. 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 a route is selected, designed and permitted. Once the route is 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.

Dewatering systems are installed prior to construction and 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.

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 a number of 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 only expected to last 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 filled in or covered 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?

Tampa Bay Water estimates the total cost for both pipeline segments at just over \$300 million. Tampa Bay Water has received \$4.5 million in co-funding from the Southwest Florida Water Management District for preliminary design of the two pipeline segments and will apply for additional funds in fiscal year 2023 and beyond.

Hillsborough County will pay for its half of Pipeline B, which is estimated to cost \$66 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 projectinfo@tampabaywater.org or call (813) 486-0361.