

End in Sight for Sewer Rehabilitation

As a local business owner involved in the development of Greenville County, as well as the Chairman of the Metropolitan Sewer Subdistrict (MetroConnects) Commission, I believe sustaining underground infrastructure is a crucial element of ensuring a community's success. Continually upgrading and replacing aging pipes is truly an investment in the future. Though often out-of-sight-out-of-mind is the general perception, it quickly becomes a pressing issue when systems begin to deteriorate, fail or no longer efficiently provide service to the customers depending on them.

Small communities face the same challenge as large communities when maintaining efficient infrastructure, but with the additional difficulty of having a smaller constituent base to support costs. The Slater Water Sewer & Light District provided sanitary sewer and water services to the Slater community through infrastructure constructed in the late 1920's. Both the sanitary sewer and water systems were in disrepair and in need of replacement. The \$3.2 million cost to replace the systems were beyond the fiscal reach of the community. However, over the last three years, the sanitary sewer and water systems have been replaced due to a notable example of regional collaboration and its benefits.

In early 2009, leadership at Renewable Water Resources (ReWa) pursued funding of \$2.2 million for the rehabilitation of the Slater sewer system from the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control (SCDHEC) State Revolving Fund (SRF). ReWa and SCDHEC then reached out to another ReWa subdistrict and requested that MetroConnects sponsor the sewer project.

MetroConnects is the largest sanitary sewer collection system serving Greenville and Anderson Counties transporting wastewater from area homes and businesses to ReWa's trunk lines and wastewater treatment plants. The MetroConnects Commission and staff readily endorsed the project, fulfilling the need of the 200+ residential community. Timing for the SCDHEC application was critical to secure the much-needed funding for the project. The MetroConnects staff successfully met the application requirements and began the necessary planning required to assist the Slater community.

Quickly joining the collaboration was Greenville County Councilman Joe Dill, then Senator Phil Shoopman and Representative Harry Cato, whose support was crucial to facilitate the transition of sanitary sewer provision for the Slater area to MetroConnects. Working with the Slater Water Sewer & Light District Commission and Greenville County Council on final approval, MetroConnects then began work on the design of the new system to be constructed utilizing ARRA funding.

Additional requirements to receive funding dictated that MetroConnects take over operation and maintenance of the existing system while the new system was being constructed. MetroConnects' Operation and Maintenance staff took on the additional responsibility of responding to service calls and making temporary repairs to the outdated system as well as providing valuable information about the existing system to assist with design and construction. The process of changing infrastructure ownership and operation and maintenance responsibilities can be time-consuming, but thanks to the cohesive work of Metroconnects' staff, legal counsel, and engineering

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consultants' deadlines were met to begin construction after funding was approved and issued in early 2010.

The construction of the new system occurred predominantly in the streets. The existing system was located behind the homes and there was extensive work required to reconnect the homes to the system. The Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (GCRA) provided \$500,000 in funding to complete the connections of the homes to the new system. Having community patience and support during the multiple years needed to complete this project was instrumental to its overall success.

Once the need was identified, Councilman Joe Dill was also instrumental in working with Greenville Water to provide a new water system following the beginning of the construction of the sewer system. MetroConnects and Greenville Water worked together to coordinate construction activities to approach the joint project efficiently and in the most timely manner possible.

MetroConnects will complete the project by the end of September with the paving of the streets, capping the conclusion of a great example in partnership. The community of Slater will reap the benefits of affordable and safe water and wastewater services for years to come, thanks to the timely and efficient collaboration. We thank Greenville County Council and Joe Dill, Greenville County Redevelopment Authority, Greenville Water, and Renewable Water Resources, as well as our past state representatives Senator Phil Shoopman and Representative Harry Cato. I would also personally like to thank the staff at MetroConnects for their hard work and dedication supporting this project and this community. We especially thank the residents of Slater for their support and understanding throughout the construction process and look forward to serving you in the years to come.

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