

# Addressing Problems Associated with Municipal Growth into RWD Territory



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**A**s with many other rural water districts, Douglas County RWD No. 1 is impacted by the growth of the county seat municipality. As Lawrence has expanded to the west, the city has annexed both virgin development territory and existing customers within the RWD's boundaries. Because state law requires compensation for the loss of existing customers, this has not been a financial problem for the District.

Recently Lawrence and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) agreed to construct a bridge over K-10 and connect it to Bob Billings Parkway (15th Street). This agreement significantly impacts RWD 1 because the District has a 4-inch water line on private easements. This line is part of a system loop. KDOT's plans called for constructing a bridge approach and entrance/exit lanes over the line and for constructing a concrete bicycle path over a second section.

Maps showing the project's extent were distributed at a meeting of all utility representatives, KDOT, and Lawrence officials. That meeting resulted in additional questions being developed (e.g., should the District encase and bury the water line along its existing easement or reroute the line three-quarters of a mile around the bridge project?). Douglas County RWD No. 1 subsequently arranged for

a meeting with KDOT engineering staff to gain additional information.

Even though KDOT will reimburse the District for all expenses (due to another state law), at that meeting, the District quickly established the desire to be as cost-efficient as possible. Our district recognizes that KDOT funds come from taxpayers like ourselves. KDOT brought additional maps and construction plans to our meeting and we jointly determined that our existing line would be buried under nearly forty feet of compacted fill, a concrete sluice would be placed eight inches above part of the line, and a two-foot deep ditch would be placed over another part of the line. Because our water line is approximately forty inches deep, the pressure and construction posed significant threats to the pipeline's viability. We are fortunate that a few years ago KRWA staff worked with us to map our existing system using GPS technology. We thus are able to provide KDOT accurate maps showing pipelines, valves, etc.

Our preliminary estimate is that 750 feet of water line will need to be encased and buried five feet deep with an additional fifty feet on each side being affected by the transition from the existing forty inches to the new 60-inch depth. Another 550 feet will be relocated to avoid the bicycle path, thereby necessitating obtaining a new private easement.

The construction project will be relatively easy in that the new encased line will be installed in the existing easement and a track hoe can be used to dig the trench. No boring under an existing road is necessary as the existing township road is dirt. However, the 750 feet of encased line represents a significant construction issue (4-inch pipe inside an 8-inch PVC pipe, with spacers to ensure the water line does not flex and break as water pressure changes) because if a leak were to ever develop, it would be almost impossible to fix. That would result in the District paying to bore and install a new water line, an expense very difficult for a small system (340 patrons) to afford.

It is essential on projects such as this that agencies and water systems work together to obtain the best outcome for all parties.

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