



West of Hills Northern Pipelines Project
Public Outreach Meetings
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Prepared: February 2012
Updated: May 2013

Q: Why the project is needed?

A: There has been a substantial amount of development in the East Bay since these transmission pipelines were built in the late 1920's and 30's. EBMUD needs to install additional pipes to correct existing deficiencies, meet future water demands and improve reliability of this aging infrastructure.

Q: How was the proposed alignment selected?

A: EBMUD identified three hydraulically equivalent alternatives for each alignment. The preferred alignment was selected based on criteria that minimized environmental impacts, conflicts with existing high risk underground utilities, life cycle costs, and maximizing the useful life of existing facilities.

Q: What types of construction methods will be used for the new pipeline installation?

A: Typically pipelines are installed in an open-trench. A tunneling method known as jack and bore would be needed to install pipelines that cross under the Wildcat Creek. A pipe bridge would be needed across the San Pablo Creek.

Q: When would construction begin?

A: The four pipelines will be installed as two separate projects with construction schedules several years apart. Construction of the two Wildcat Pipelines in Berkeley and El Cerrito is anticipated to begin in mid-2015 and end in mid-2017. Construction of the two Central Pressure Zone Pipelines in El Cerrito, Richmond, and San Pablo is anticipated to begin in 2021 and end in 2022.

Q: How long would the construction be in front of my house?

A: There are several steps to pipeline construction, which result in crews working for about 5 days in each area, depending on local conditions. Crews will saw cut the pavement, excavate the trench, lower the pipe into place, weld the pipeline segments together, backfill the trench, and install temporary asphalt to repair the road. The contractor then comes back towards the end of the project to install permanent asphalt to repair the road. In locations where new pipes are connected to existing pipes construction periods may take several weeks. Contractors can typically install between 80 to 200 feet of pipeline in a single day

Q: What are the hours of construction?

A: Typically between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Longer construction hours (up to 24 hours per day) may be required where the proposed pipelines connect with existing pipelines to minimize customer water service disruption and night work may be required at major intersections to avoid traffic impacts.

Q: How will the construction affect the water service at my house or business?

A: As all of the new pipelines are large transmission pipelines with no water service connections, we do not expect construction to affect water service to existing residential and business customers. If your connection is affected by a nearby tie-in, you may experience a short term disruption of service. EBMUD makes every reasonable attempt to ensure you will be notified in advance.

Q: Will I be able to access my home if the road is closed for construction?

A: Many of the residential streets will be closed during construction hours with access restored during non-work hours. Pedestrian access to homes would be maintained at all times. Residents' vehicular access will be allowed to the extent feasible, although substantial delays may be encountered depending upon the stage of construction.

Q: Will emergency vehicles have access to the construction area?

A: Emergency vehicles will be allowed on the closed streets to service residents within the construction area.

Q: Will construction affect bus routes?

A: Bus routes would be detoured around closed streets. EBMUD will coordinate with the transit agencies to temporarily relocate existing bus stops that are in conflict with the construction activities.

Q: Will the bicycle routes remain open? If not, will there be detour routes for bicyclists?

A: Through traffic will not be allowed on the closed streets. Both bicycles and vehicles will be detoured around the construction zone.

Q: Will street parking be allowed?

A: Equipment and material would be stored on the street overnight and would temporarily reduce the amount of parking on the street. EBMUD will work with the cities to allow residents to park in adjacent neighborhoods during construction.

Q: Will excavated trenches be left open overnight?

A: All excavated trenches which are not backfilled at the end of day will be secured using appropriate trench plates or temporary fencing after work hours. Trench plates can be walked on or driven over.

Q: How will street pavement be restored?

A: EBMUD will do a T-cut repair, which means a replacement of the roadway to one foot beyond the edge of trench. Where the edge of the trench is within 2 feet of a gutter lip or the edge of pavement, the pavement between the trench cut and the gutter lip or edge of pavement will be removed and replaced. The permanent replacement paving will be installed towards the end of the project, so initially residents will see temporary asphalt in the trench area.

Q: Where will the pipeline be located in the street?

A: The exact location of the pipelines will be determined during the final design of the project and depends upon where other existing utilities are located in the street. Occasionally, unforeseen conditions may require alignment adjustments.

Q: How deep will the new pipeline be underneath the street?

A: The new pipelines would typically have 4 feet of cover and would typically go under other existing underground utilities.

Q: How will EBMUD manage the risks from high pressure gas and petroleum product pipelines?

A: Most residential areas have existing utilities buried in the street including water lines, sewer lines, storm drains, and natural gas lines. Some communities have underground electric utilities, and will also have telephone lines, power lines, and cable lines buried in the street and sidewalks. Of these existing utilities those that pose a high risk are high-pressure natural gas pipelines, petroleum pipelines, pressurized sewage pipelines, and high-voltage electric supply lines. EBMUD refers to these utilities as high priority utilities.

To avoid damaging existing underground utilities EBMUD requests as-built documents and system maps from all utilities and companies that operate transmission facilities within the project area; conducts site visits to observe utility markers and surface features such as manhole rims, grates, and valve pots; and contacts the Underground Service Alert to have existing utilities marked prior to excavation. EBMUD uses geophysical methods like ground penetrating radar or electromagnetic signaling when there is poor, non-existent, or conflicting utility data in congested utility locations. When the pipeline is to be installed within 5 feet of an existing high-priority utility, then EBMUD hand digs to locate the high priority utility during the design of the project.

Q: Does the project take into consideration the shallow groundwater table in the project areas?

A: Yes. It is common in the East Bay to encounter groundwater while excavating trenches to install water pipes. Crews will pump water out of trench and dispose of it in the storm drain or sanitary sewer depending upon the quality of the water. If the water is contaminated it will be treated before release.

Q: Why not install the Wildcat Pipeline (El Cerrito) and the Central Pressure Zone Pipeline (El Cerrito/Richmond) in a single pipeline or a single trench?

A: The Wildcat Pipeline (El Cerrito) and the Central Pressure Zone Pipeline (El Cerrito/Richmond) serve customers at different elevations, so the water in each pipe is at a different pressure and the two pipelines cannot be combined into a single pipeline. Regarding a single common trench, the two pipelines connect into existing transmission mains at different points, so placing the Wildcat Pipeline (El Cerrito) in San Pablo Avenue would require constructing a longer pipeline. Similarly attempting to place the Central Pressure Zone Pipeline (El Cerrito/Richmond) in Richmond Street would require constructing a longer pipeline.

Q: How will the alternative alignments be addressed in the EIR?

A: Alternative alignments will be reviewed and discussed in the alternatives section of the EIR. They will not be evaluated to the same level of detail for their environmental impacts as the proposed alignments.

Q: What opportunities does the public have to comment during the EIR process?

A: EBMUD issued a Notice of Preparation in February 2012 to responsible agencies and known interested parties, inviting public input on the scope and content of the environmental impact report.

EBMUD published the Draft Environmental Impact Report on May 15 2013. The public is invited to review and comment on the document during the 45-day public review comment period with public comments due by 4:30 p.m. on July 2, 2013. The following three public meetings are scheduled to review the Draft EIR and will start at 6:00 p.m.:

June 12, 2013 First Presbyterian Church, 2407 Dana Street, Berkeley

June 19, 2013 Maple Hall, 13831 San Pablo Avenue #4, San Pablo

June 26, 2013 El Cerrito High School, 540 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito

Certification of the EIR and review and approval of the West of Hills Northern Pipelines Project is scheduled to go before the EBMUD Board of Directors at a regular Board meeting in December 2013.

Q: Will the general public be given the opportunity to comment on the alignment alternatives? How will these comments be addressed?

A: EBMUD made 13 presentations while performing the Alignment Study to solicit input from cities, special districts, business organizations, and the general public on the alignment alternatives. Additionally the Notice of Preparation was published in February 2013 and an agency scoping meeting was held in March 2012 to solicit input from the public agencies on the potential environmental impacts of the project. EBMUD is currently in the public review period for the Draft Environmental Impact Report, which was published on May 15, 2013 with public comments due by 4:30 p.m. on July 2, 2013. Comments to the Draft EIR will be responded to in writing via the Final EIR, Response to Comments which will be made available no less than 10 days prior to the certification hearing.

Q: Has there been coordination with other agencies to discuss their planned projects in the project areas?

A: Yes. EBMUD met with representatives from Berkeley, El Cerrito, Richmond and San Pablo, Stege Sanitary District, and BART to coordinate this project with their capital improvement plans. EBMUD will continue to seek coordination opportunities with other agencies as the project moves forward.

Q: How do I continue to learn about the progress of the project?

A: Project information is available on the project's website:

<http://www.ebmud.com/about-ebmud/news/project-updates/west-hills-northern-pipelines-project>, which will be updated regularly. EBMUD will also mail out flyers and postcards to notify residents within the project area about the upcoming meetings.