

US 41 Utility Expansion Program Project Frequently Asked Questions

What is an MSBU?

An MSBU is a geographic area within the County, created by ordinance and defined by specific boundaries, through which particular services are provided and funded. Some examples of services that MSBUs may provide are road & drainage maintenance, waterway dredging, stormwater improvements, water and/or wastewater facilities, fire protection, or sanitation service.

Why can't we do it (improve our property) when the property is developing?

The MSBU process is generally intended to provide the means to fund a project serving multiple properties, not single properties one at a time. The larger MSBU project provides the opportunity to realize cost savings through economy of scale items such as; contractor mobilization costs, lower bid unit prices and interest rates that can be locked in at lower rates. Further, it is virtually impossible to extend utility mains on a parcel by parcel basis due to system design and operational requirements.

What is the present MSBU process?

The present tentative schedule for the MSBU process for this project is to establish an MSBU during fiscal year 2016 (October, 2015 through September, 2016) leading up to the final budget hearings in September 2016 where the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) will consider final MSBU approval. As part of this process, CCU presents a cost estimate and assessment roll at the budget hearings normally held in May, 2016 followed by a MSBU public hearing in July, 2016. The public hearing notices are generally sent in June prior to the public hearing held in July. After completing this process, the BCC will have one more opportunity to formally approve the program in late September, 2016.

We have confusion over the costs slides from the July 29, 2015 public meetings held at the Eastport Environmental Campus, was this really the true costs?

The cost estimate was prepared utilizing the latest construction costs resulting from recent competitive bids for similar work performed in this area. Since the cost estimates were presented during the 2012 informational meetings, there has been an increase of approximately 30% in the construction costs due to the improving economy. The costs, however, do reflect elimination of all costs previously allocated in the 2012 presentation to the property owners for the US 41 utility transmission mains currently under construction within the US 41 FDOT widening project. The costs for all of the utility mains now being constructed within the US 41 right-of-way are paid for with other CCU funds. The overall result is that wastewater costs per offset foot have decreased slightly and the potable water and reclaimed main offset foot prices have increased slightly.

How much is the KIA dealership paying for their connection fees in this area? Are impact fees reimbursable?

The KIA dealership agreement is being finalized at this time. This agreement requires the KIA dealership to construct various utility improvements to serve their property that are comparable to improvements required to extend services to the commercial corridor properties. This contract includes the dealership is paying for their extension by an agreement because an MSBU is not in place to extend lines to their property. The final agreement will be recorded at the Clerk of Courts website following final execution by both parties.

What happens if you currently have wells, what will happen to them?

If you are currently under a permit from Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) for well withdrawals or stormwater withdrawals, you will not be required to connect to reclaimed water. For new developments, reclaimed water connection will be required. The well does need to be disconnected from the property's potable water system at the time of connection to the CCU potable water system.

Will prepayments be allowed? Is there a benefit to pre-paying?

Prepayment, also known as a "cash only" option, is generally allowed if you wish to avoid interest charges which are collected under the MSBU program to finance the project over a 20-year period. A "cash only" option will be explored and, if feasible, will be presented as part of this program prior to securing financing. However, once financing is secured, the prepayment amount takes into account the expense of financing commitments that result from obtaining financing.

Will vacant lots have to pay?

Yes, vacant lots will have to pay their assessments of the construction costs.

Does the MSBU follow with the sale of the property?"

Yes, if the property is sold and the assessments were not pre-paid, the assessment can remain with the property and continue on the tax bill for the new owner to pay.

Do we need to have reclaimed water?

Reclaimed water service is being offered as an option at this time. Reclaimed water mains are under construction currently as part of the FDOT US 41 widening project. However, the BCC will make the final decision as to whether reclaimed water mains will be extended to all of the lots within the proposed MSBU.

What if I don't want to connect, do I have to connect to all the services provided?

Mandatory connection guidelines provide the basis for connecting to potable water, wastewater, and reclaimed water. Those mandatory connection requirements are outlined in Charlotte County Code of Ordinances (Municode) Sec. 3-8-233. A letter will be sent to the affected property owners providing 365 days to connect. A second notice is then mailed after 365 days and an additional 20 days are provided to connect to the system before a monthly base charge is placed on the utility bill.

I can't recapture the space on my property where the onsite system is located, what benefit will this project provide to me?

It will offer you an opportunity to further improve your property on this vacant onsite system space to add more parking space, expansion of the building, more flexibility for use of the property due to OSTDS limitations, landscaping or other improvements. In addition, CCU will be responsible for maintenance and repairs on the utility systems outside your property limits. Further, if your OSTDS fails now, or needs a repair that is the property owner's responsibility to correct.

I put in a \$40,000 septic tank. What do I do with the septic tank now that this program might move forward?

Until the BCC votes to move forward or not, there is no action for you to take. If the project moves forward, other optional uses can be explored including storage for irrigation.

Will the surveys mailed previously or completed at the meetings on July 29 and July 30 results be posted online?

Yes.

What is included in the scope of the project, and why have costs gone up by 30% but cost per ERU went down compared to 2012?

Utility service for potable water, wastewater and reclaimed water are included in this potential project. The costs have gone up by 30% due to the improved economy, higher material costs as well as higher expenses incurred by construction companies bidding on our projects. The costs for wastewater service have gone down for the project due to the use of vacuum sewer to provide this service and the elimination of the US 41 transmission main cost sharing included in 2012. CCU bases the cost projections on engineering price indexes as well as current projects bid numbers.

How can I find out more about zoning or development rules that are changing in the corridor?

Visit the Charlotte County Community Development department at www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and select "Community Development" from the Departments list.

Will there be evening meetings in the future?

Yes.

What additional costs are there besides the line cost and connection fees?

The property owner is responsible for the connection to the utility systems provided at the property line to the structure for each utility needed. The existing septic tank also needs to be pumped and abandoned/removed as per regulations. The estimated cost for each utility connection is approximately \$1,500 to \$2,500 depending upon individual site requirements.

Are we eliminating wells as part of the project?

No. If a property owner has a permit for a well, the well is not required to be abandoned.

What am I paying for with this project?

You are paying for the infrastructure to provide public utilities of potable water, wastewater and reclaimed lines to the property.

Will a rebate for OSTDS be offered?

Any rebates will be decided by the BCC, if this project moves forward. CCU staff will be evaluating different options to present to the BCC for consideration regarding existing developed property assessment adjustments.

How many connections will the project cover?

The total number of lots within this commercial corridor is approximately 1,346. There are approximately 1,018 tax accounts within this corridor.

How about the Hardship Program, have we considered everything, other funds, grants, and have we explored hardship programs for the businesses and/or exemptions?

Any hardship funding will be decided by the BCC. CCU continuously works to identify additional grant funding opportunities.

Will everyone have to connect to reclaimed water if it is extended to their property?

Existing businesses are not required to use the reclaimed water, at this time.

Didn't the BCC promise to pay for all the laterals?

The BCC has approved the installation of the transmission mains within the US 41 FDOT widening project with payment by CCU. No other decisions have been made at this time.

Is CCU going to educate the public on reclaimed water and proper uses?

Yes, and we currently do. We educate the public during our facility tours we hold October-March. We also show an educational video on Charlotte County Television (CCTV) at various times and on the CCU Facebook page.

Are the commercial owners paying for more than their share of the lines if the surrounding areas will connect to these lines as well?

All properties will be assessed with the same methodology on a fair and equitable basis.

Will we have a line extension reimbursement process similar to Ft. Myers?

CCU does not have a reimbursement program at this time.