

**Giant new pipe benefits all  
Rate hikes are a solid investment  
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Editorial**

Colorado Springs voters have wisely declined recent tax hike proposals to pay for fuzzy, ill-defined, pie-in-the-sky promises of more public safety and “jobs”. It’s a good thing voters have said no, because doing so has left more money in their households and businesses to pay for something that’s not fuzzy wuzzy at all, and is absolutely vital to the economic success of Colorado Springs: Water.

Colorado needs more water and it will get more water, but it will come at a hefty cost. The Colorado Springs City Council, serving as the Colorado Springs Utility Board, approved a plan Wednesday to build and finance the Southern Deliver System pipeline, which will deliver Arkansas River water the city owns and stores in Pueblo Reservoir. It’s more important than economic development incentives, the United States Olympic Committee Headquarters, and all marketing campaigns combined. It is tangible, real, and everyone will win.

The massive project will cost nearly \$1 billion in today’s dollars, and may result in more than a doubling of water rates by 2019. Today, the average monthly water bill is nearly \$40, and the city predicts it will be \$100 in 2019.

More water isn’t optional. Colorado Springs must have it in order to prosper and grow. All other talk about economic development, attracting primary employers, and becoming more like Austin, Texas, (home of the city’s latest economic adviser) means nothing if we can’t meet our growing water demands.

City officials have done a tremendous job in overcoming the substantial obstacles involved in obtaining approval for a pipeline that will run through Pueblo County, where the project has been the topic of substantial opposition.

After years of planning and waiting, city officials showed continued patience by settling on an implementation date of 2016. More aggressive plans, for earlier implementation, would have required more immediate and dramatic rate increases that would have caused users substantial new burden in the midst of a horrific recession.

Yes, it would be wonderful if residents of Colorado Springs could continue enjoying relatively inexpensive water far into the future. But water is an increasingly scarce resource in Colorado, and it will never come cheaply again.

Residents of less fiscally responsible cities, with governments allowed to splurge on every shiny idea that comes along, might be poorly suited to absorb the cost of a massive new pipeline. In

Colorado Springs, residents have kept local government relatively lean. As such, they're in a better position to pay for this genuine asset.

Coordinating infrastructure for the sale and delivery of water is a perfectly legitimate role of city government. By providing roads, water, police and fire, city government creates a venue in which big business, small business and employees are able and free to thrive. View the rate hikes as a legitimate investment in Colorado Springs – an investment that benefits every resident and every business, without favoritism, for generations to come.