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Paper

THE GAZETTE'S VIEWPOINT

City officials exceed promises with Southern Delivery System

Congratulations to the Colorado Springs City Council and the staff of Colorado Springs Utilities. As completion of the Southern Delivery System draws near, the massive water pipeline project re budget.

The project includes more than 50 miles of pipe that will transport water uphill from Pueblo Reservoir to Colorado Springs, Fountain, Security and Pueblo West. It should be completed by fall of

To grasp the magnitude of phrases such as "under budget" and "ahead of schedule," consider the country's experience with so many other major public works projects. Take, for example, Color

Americans love DIA. It's the fifth busiest airport in the country and always among the 10 busiest in the world. It conveniently puts the rest of the world within easy reach of anyone who lives in Co efficient. It was also a mainstay of material for late night comics throughout the early and mid '90s. The airport was to cost \$1.5 billion. By the time it finally opened, years late, it had lost nearly tha alone. The final bill for the airport came in at about \$5 billion

— more than three times the amount promised. The notorious baggage system, which was to create a revolution in travel efficiency, has never worked.

Boston's Big Dig transportation tunnel was supposed to be finished in 1998 at a cost of \$2.8 billion. It was completed in 2007, nearly 10 years late, for nearly \$14.6 billion. Seattle's Sound Trans billion, grew to cost more than \$4 billion before shovels broke dirt.

Lists of multibillion-dollar public works boondoggles are easy to find. Pipelines are notorious for cost overruns and delays. Just google "public works boondoggles." What's nearly impossible to fi which results have been delivered ahead of schedule and under budget.

When the council approved the Southern Delivery System in 2009, in its role as board of directors for Colorado Springs Utilities, politicians said the project would cost just under \$1 billion. It wou the utility's water customers.

Today, with the project ahead of schedule, the full tab is expected to be \$847 million — \$147 million less than the original estimate. Rate hikes will be lower than expected.

The below-budget tab results from Utilities executives taking only the smartest and most competitive bids during a down economy, when contractors were desperate for work. One contractor inv removes less dirt and creates a safer, easier-to manage-trench for laying pipe. Utilities engineers found their own efficiencies — not treating the project like a jobs program — including a redesign treatment facility buildings. It's a culture of serve the public, not stiff the public.

Underground pipelines are to capital improvement projects what Stan Musial is to baseball. Underrated and unappreciated. But without SDS, all hopes for serious economic growth would be pie new neighborhoods or businesses. With SDS, a city of 450,000 people can grow to more than 600,000 — which this community is on track to reach in the next two decades. With this pipeline, bus assurance the city can handle their water needs.

In a country infamous for public works delays, cost overruns and waste, SDS stands out as an example of how it can and should be done for the public.



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