



News Release

Contact: **Teresa Hamilton Hall**
Roanoke Co. Public Information Officer
540-772-2010
thall@RoanokeCountyVA.gov

Sarah Baumgardner
Environmental Communications Coordinator
540-853-5707
sarah.baumgardner@WesternVAWater.org

Larry V. Moore, Sr.
Assistant Co. Administrator, Franklin Co.
540-483-3030
larrymoore@franklincountyva.org

Western Virginia Water Authority and Localities Gather for Special Meeting *Authority, Franklin and Roanoke County Supervisors Voice Support for Joint Endeavor*

(April 16, 2007) (Franklin Co., VA) The Western Virginia Water Authority, Roanoke and Franklin County Supervisors today voiced their approval of a \$5.5 million project that will make public water available to parts of the Route 220 corridor that currently do not have access to this service. Discussion of the project took place during a joint meeting this afternoon of the Authority and supervisors held at Boones Mill Elementary.

The project calls for extending public water approximately 12 miles along Route 220 from the Clearbrook area of Roanoke County to Wirtz Plateau in Franklin County. The Virginia Department of Transportation has agreed to allow the Authority place the water line in its existing right-of-way. During the joint meeting, members of the Authority and supervisors signed a resolution in support of the project. Because the water line will generate new commercial and residential growth, the supervisors have also instructed their staffs to begin a corridor study which will among other things address traffic related issues, and designate areas for preservation, economic development and residential use.

The Authority will design, construct and issue bonds for the project. The debt service will be paid by Franklin and Roanoke Counties. Franklin County's share of the project is approximately \$3.2 million. Roanoke County's portion of the project is approximately \$2.3 million. Both localities will recover their cost from new commercial and residential developers who utilize the water line through increased tax revenues and connection fees.

Construction of the project is expected to take 18 months to two years to complete.

Frequently Asked Questions About The Water Line Extension

General Questions:

The Western Virginia Water Authority, Franklin and Roanoke Counties are entering into an agreement which should be finalized in next few months involving the extension of water lines through Roanoke County into Franklin County. How did this project evolve?

Franklin County approached the Western Virginia Water Authority and Roanoke County a little more than a year ago about the possibility of providing water to Franklin County. Franklin County was impressed with the level of service the Water Authority provided its customers in the City of Roanoke and the County of Roanoke and wanted to provide the same reliable and dependable water service to its residents and businesses.

Where will the water lines associated with this project be located?

The project calls for running the lines along Route 220 just below Kingery's store in Clearbrook to Wirtz Plateau in Franklin County. The Virginia Department of Transportation is supportive of this project. The Department has agreed to let the Western Virginia Water Authority place the lines in existing VDOT right-of-way.

How much will the water line project cost and how long will it take to construct?

After much research, the Water Authority has calculated the cost of the project at approximately \$5.5 million. This cost, which is not expected to vary, will be shared by Franklin and Roanoke Counties. Franklin County's share of the project is \$3.2 million. Roanoke County will contribute \$2.3 million toward the project. The project is expected to take 18 months to two years to complete.

How does the Western Virginia Water Authority view the project and what role will the Authority play?

The Water Authority will design, construct and maintain the water line and views the project as an opportunity to provide a regional service that will enhance the quality of life for customers as well as the regional community. The Authority will also issue the bonds for the project. The debt service on the bonds will be repaid by Franklin and Roanoke Counties.

Will water rates increase for existing Water Authority customers in order to cover the cost of the project?

No. Because this project will be funded by Franklin County and the County of Roanoke, the rate equalization plan established for customers of the Water Authority will not be impacted by the construction of this water line. Customers in Franklin County that are served by this water line will pay the prevailing Franklin County rates while Roanoke County residents will continue to pay the previously established Authority rates.

Will this project jeopardize the water supply, especially during times of drought, for existing Water Authority customers?

No. The 2003 Long Range Water Supply Study, prepared by the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, shows the Western Virginia Water Authority having a surplus water supply until at least the year 2040. This project will allow the Water Authority to utilize the surplus water from multiple water sources and treatment facilities and maximize efficiencies. By

following the recommendations of the 2003 study, the residents in our regional community will experience the same safe and reliable long-term water supply enjoyed by our current customers.

Questions & Answers Specific to Franklin County:

How is this project beneficial to Franklin County residents and businesses?

Franklin County identified the Route 220 Corridor as an area that needed water service in its most recent Comprehensive Plan update. As such, this major transportation corridor can provide economic development opportunities while also providing a safe and reliable water source, plus fire protection to the businesses and residents currently living in the corridor. Additionally, there have been a number of concerns expressed about the unreliable quality and insufficient quantity of safe and reliable water in the corridor that can be addressed by this project. The Western Virginia Water Authority has a proven track record of managing both construction and day to day oversight of such systems and offers an excellent opportunity for a genuine partnership.

How will Franklin County pay for its part of the project? Debt service for Franklin County's share of the project has been built into the County's Capital Budget for infrastructure development and will be offset over time by increased tax revenues and connection fees.

Will Franklin County be able to ensure that mechanisms are in place to control growth along the Route 220 corridor?

Franklin County will undergo a corridor study while the construction is ongoing to determine the appropriate tools to manage growth in the corridor.

Will Franklin County become a formal member of the Western Virginia Water Authority?

When the City of Roanoke and Roanoke County first began analyzing the possibility of creating an authority, the other valley jurisdictions were not yet ready to investigate a regional water and wastewater authority. However, the Water Authority is designed so that other jurisdictions can join later, under mutually agreeable arrangements, when those jurisdictions believe such a move is in their best interest. If Franklin County decides to join the Water Authority in the future, they too will be adequately represented.

Questions & Answers Specific to Roanoke County:

Why is Roanoke County supportive of the project?

Roanoke County views this as a positive endeavor that will benefit the Roanoke Valley:

- This is an opportunity to help a neighboring locality.
- Because Roanoke County and Franklin County are partners in the project they will share the cost together.
- Since VDOT has allowed the water lines to be placed in existing right-of-way there should not be a need to access private property.
- Most localities, including Roanoke County, view transportation corridors, such as Route 220, as ideal areas for economic development to enhance the tax base and provide jobs.
- The project will make public water accessible to citizens who do not currently have access to this service.

How will Roanoke County assure that growth in this area will be appropriate and controlled?

It is anticipated that the engineering and design work associated with the project will take at least six months followed by a construction period of a year to a year-and-a-half. During the first six months, Roanoke County expects to complete a corridor study of the Route 220 area. The corridor study will look closely at the area's comprehensive plan and make any necessary amendments. It will also include a traffic analysis that will address any road improvements as well as the impact of I-73. In addition, it will address zoning, land-use and environmental issues in order to determine the criteria needed to analyze future sites for commercial, industrial and residential development. Final decisions regarding zoning issues and future development will be determined by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

How will Roanoke County fund its part of the project?

The Water Authority will issue the bonds for the project, with the debt service to be repaid by the localities. Roanoke County's portion of the project equates to \$2.3 million or approximately \$170,000 a year. Roanoke County expects to recoup its investment from increased tax revenues and connection fees from new commercial and residential developers in the corridor.

#####