

Analysis: Localities Could Save Taxpayers Huge Sums on Underground Infrastructure with Competition, Better Materials

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As the infrastructure that delivers water to your home begins to deteriorate, governments at all levels need to take steps to ensure they're not flushing taxpayer dollars down the drain when replacing the pipes, according to an issue brief published by the National Taxpayers Union (NTU).

"By opening municipal procurement and ensuring that more competitive bidding is tied to federal funds for underground infrastructure, the U.S. will save hundreds of billions of dollars in the short term," wrote Bruce Hollands, Executive Director of the Uni-Bell PVC Pipe Association and the author of the brief. "This would also pave the way to an economy that wastes less energy, utilities that are more efficient, and pipe networks with much longer life cycles."

NTU Issue Brief #176, *The Underground Infrastructure Crisis: Rebuilding Water and Sewer Systems without a Flood of Red Ink*, reports:

- 1. Infrastructure for water, electricity, sewer, and transportation services is all deteriorating at a rate that will cause all four to need replacement at the same time. At a minimum, this will cost \$6.5 trillion in the next 25 years.**
- 2. Corrosion of pipes costs water and sewer systems \$50.7 billion annually, and 17 percent of all water pumped in the United States is lost to leakage from corroded pipes.**
- 3. Federal policy over the past 50 years has encouraged the use of plastic and PVC piping that reduces corrosion and minimizes transportation, maintenance, and construction costs to municipalities.**
- 4. Pending legislation to address infrastructure renewal does not address corrosion problems or encourage use of more sustainable materials.**

"Before simply pouring more dollars into infrastructure, U.S. policymakers must examine how to better spend the money already set aside for municipal water and wastewater initiatives," Hollands concluded. "Trillions of dollars could be saved on future underground infrastructure renewal."

NTU is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded in 1969 to work for lower taxes, smaller government, and economic freedom at all levels. *Note: NTU Issue Brief #176, The Underground Infrastructure Crisis: Rebuilding Water and Sewer Systems without a Flood of Red Ink, is available online at www.ntu.org.*

The complete NTU Issue Brief is available in [PDF](#).