

Wastewater Service Extension is the expansion of the Metropolitan Council's (Council) regional wastewater system or locally owned and operated treatment facilities to accommodate growth in the urban and rural areas of the metropolitan area. Local governments may plan for wastewater service extension within undeveloped areas not currently served by a wastewater system or redevelopment areas that require new or increased wastewater capacity.

### Development Staging

Development staging is a tool that helps communities plan for growth in specific areas and communicate future service needs to the Council. Local governments must include "staging plans" in their comprehensive plan (Plan) in which they identify areas for development to accommodate both residential and non-residential growth. Staging plans reflect a 20-year planning horizon broken down into 5- or 10-year phases. The Council acknowledges the local 20-year staging plan and commits to serving the growth reflected in the Plan within that planning horizon.

If the service level need reflected in a staging plan exceeds the capacity of the regional conveyance or treatment system, the Council may program additional system capacity improvements in its Capital Program to accommodate this need. For the Council to consider this change, the jurisdiction must satisfy the [cost, growth, and development expectation policies](#) in the Council's *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan (WRPP)*.

### Metropolitan Urban Service Area

The Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) is the area within the 7-county metropolitan region to which the regional wastewater system provides service. This area is established by communities through their comprehensive sewer plan, which is approved by the Council as part of the local comprehensive planning process. Communities generally use development staging to identify the 10-year period during which specific land areas will develop and require wastewater service. For example, a community's 2040 Plan would include a 2030 MUSA which reflects the land area(s) available for new development between 2020 and 2030, and a 2040 MUSA which reflects the land area(s) available for new development between 2030 and 2040. The Council uses information about the second 10-year staging area, or in this case the 2040 MUSA, to proactively plan for service extensions or capacity enhancements.

Communities that are not connected to the regional wastewater system, but provide their own centralized wastewater service, take a similar approach to development staging that allows them to plan for local investments. This local service area has historically been referred to as the Local Urban Service Area or LUSA.

### Long-Term Service Areas

The Council plans beyond the 20-year planning horizon by identifying potential long-term service areas (LTSAs) to accommodate growth further into the future. The size of LTSAs depends on the maximum capacity of the wastewater treatment facility. This is dictated by the size of the property on which the treatment facility is located, the amount of land area available for potential acquisition to expand the treatment facility, and the regulatory permit requirements for additional treatment processes and facility improvements and expansions.

It is important to note that LTSA boundaries do not represent the official future wastewater service area. These boundaries are ultimately defined by local governments through the comprehensive planning process and future wastewater treatment discharge permit requirements. Despite potential boundary changes, the size of the service area will likely stay the same. Proposals that extend service outside of the LTSA must be offset by an equal area of reduction elsewhere to maintain the size of the service area.

For more information on the location of LTSAs, see the [Long-Term Service Areas of the Regional Wastewater System map](#) in the WRPP.

### Wastewater Service Extension Requests

According to [Minnesota Statutes § 473.513](#), local governments within the 7-county metropolitan area must submit all applications for extension of public sanitary sewers to the Council for review, including applications from jurisdictions not connected to the regional wastewater system but served through local wastewater systems. The Council will review for consistency with development staging in the local comprehensive plan and comprehensive sewer plan, consistency with the future land use plan, and available capacity for the anticipated discharge of the proposed project, if applicable.

If an application is not consistent with the Plan, the jurisdiction must submit a comprehensive plan amendment to the Council for review and authorization. The Council will review the amendment for conformance with the regional wastewater system and its ability to accommodate additional service. If authorized, the MUSA boundary will be adjusted to include the subject area of the amendment.

If the Council is not able to accommodate the additional service, it will determine that the proposed amendment would impact the regional wastewater system and will not authorize it. In these cases, the Council will proceed by determining whether it can program additional capacity in its capital improvement program to provide the added service.

#### Additional Resources

For more information on the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services division's capital projects, see the current [5-Year Capital Program](#) (short-term capital projects) and the [WRPP](#) (long-term capital projects).

For more information on sewer extension permits, visit the Council's [Sanitary Sewer Permits](#) webpage. If you have additional questions regarding wastewater service extension, please contact Emma de Villa at [emma.devilla@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:emma.devilla@metc.state.mn.us) or the [Sector Representative](#) for your jurisdiction.