

DCWTS Groundbreaking Event: Speech by John Peterson, District General Manager

Today is a big day for all of us – a bricks and mortar milestone for the District that is the result of a collaborative planning effort that has spanned nearly a decade and required hard work and coordination by many partners, partners that are here today to share in our celebration.

Over the years, many of you have been able to envision the potential for infrastructure partnerships that support economic development in Clark County.

Fortunately, enough of you also believed in and trusted each other to get us here today...you also trusted the District to help you get it done.

I want to point out that the starting point to get us to this dedication moment came out of the process of forming the Discovery Clean Water Alliance – our regional sewer partnership between Clark County, the Cities of Battle Ground and Ridgefield and the District. We are just now creating our first Capital Plan for this joint public agency. We will be celebrating many shared capital improvements in the future.

Today's project, however, is the fruit of a second partnership between the City of Ridgefield and the District. As most of you know, the City put its faith in the District by transferring its wastewater collection system to us in January of this year. We take that responsibility seriously. Moving this transmission project forward is a major step in honoring our commitment.

The project we are here to celebrate today is more than a series of pipelines and pump stations; we see it in the broader context...as an important part of the greater effort to connect our communities through strategic infrastructure investment, and as a major step in stimulating next level economic development in Clark County.

The District Board continually focuses on providing reliable and affordable service to our customers, AND they understand we are responsible for providing the infrastructure that will serve the next generation of customers and the next generation of jobs that are vital to the health of our community.

When this project is completed, we will be one giant step closer to fulfilling our economic development potential. I, for one, am looking forward to seeing our community thrive and prosper in the years ahead.

And, finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank you all for getting it done NOW. As many of you are aware, this is an historic moment in both the capital and construction marketplaces. Frankly, there has not been a more affordable time in recent memory to execute a project of this magnitude.

As a result, this new capacity is being brought on line with minimal impact to our rate payers today and the opportunity to more than pay for itself in the years to come. For the District, everything starts and ends with our customers.

So, now, the time has come to thank some of the folks that helped get us here today. Quite frankly, this major investment would not have happened without all of your assistance:

- First and foremost, I want to thank our regional sewer visionary, former State Senator Joe Zarelli. Joe is going to say a few words in a minute, but I have to tell you this is the gentleman who got the whole ball rolling. He saw the potential and took a chance on us. He helped us get the seed money to start planning, and then showed an enormous amount of patience and support while we worked out the details. Senator, I cannot thank you enough for that investment and faith.

- I want to thank staff and elected officials from our Alliance partnership – regional partnerships are complicated, but you found a way to move forward. This is just one of many legacy achievements I expect you'll be able to point to in the years ahead. Thank you to our partners from Battle Ground, Ridgefield, Clark County and the District Board and staff.
- To our dear friends at the Washington State Public Works Board and the legislators that provide the public works assistance account...thank you for the Trust Fund loans. I'm not sure we would have allowed ourselves to do more than dream about the transmission system without the combined \$20 million in low-interest loans you brought to the project. We anticipate that investment will be more than repaid as new jobs and revenue are generated in the future. The difference in loan interest and security between a Public Works loan and a revenue bond is significant...as in several million dollars significant. We can't express how important this tool is for capital infrastructure investment. We encourage everyone that wants to have more of these events in the future to work hard to continue to support the public works assistance account at the legislature.
- Thank you to the Washington State Department of Transportation. We are also saving several million dollars by installing these pipes in the freeway median. Your partnership and cooperation has been invaluable...literally. It would have been inordinately expensive to route the transmission system anywhere else. In addition, we will be siting a new regional pump station right here in this WSDOT rest area and taking over the sewer systems for both the rest areas for you. We really appreciate this great location and the partnership.
- Thank you Washington Department of Ecology. The Discovery Corridor Wastewater Transmission System will connect our region from Ridgefield to Vancouver, benefiting both rate payers AND the environment by transmitting wastewater from Ridgefield to the Salmon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. Thank you for going the extra mile to help us get that done and supporting our regional vision.
- A big thank you to the Mayor of Ridgefield, Ron Onslow, the Ridgefield City Council, the Port of Ridgefield, the Columbia River Economic Development Council, the Responsible Growth Forum and so many other community members who have actively or quietly been advocating on our behalf along the way. The wind we have had at our back from all of you is truly amazing.
- A final thank you to the engineers and consultants, especially the Otak design team and CH2M HILL construction management team...thank you for all of the great work you've done to help make this happen. And to our local Battle Ground contractor, Tapani Inc. We look forward to working with you to get this show on the road and know you will do great work for us and the community that you are part of as well.