

# Water line gets initial Senate OK

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The Wyoming Senate unanimously passed the first reading of Gillette's Madison pipeline bill Monday afternoon. The bill still must pass two more readings before heading to the House for a vote.

The vote might change somewhat on later readings, but Mayor Duane Evenson said he is more and more confident that the bill will pass both branches of the Legislature.

"Sen. Hines is doing a fantastic job and we have the support of Mike Purcell (director of the Wyoming Water Development Commission)," Evenson told the City Council on Monday night. "We wouldn't get a dime if Purcell didn't think this was a project worth doing."

John Hines of Gillette is the Senate president and a sponsor of the bill, along with Rep. Tom Lubnau, R-Gillette.

The project would build a duplicate 42-mile line from the city's well site near Pine Haven.

Purcell said earlier one of the reasons he supports the Madison pipeline project is because it eventually will become part of a regional water system. The pipeline itself, now proposed to be 42 inches in diameter, could get bigger to serve Gillette and the smaller communities and subdivisions in the region. The state favors projects like the Madison pipeline that can link customers to a central water source.

A regional water study by the state is due this summer. That study will be the basis for establishing such a water project and will suggest options about who will pay for and maintain the system.

The Madison bill requests \$16.8 million from the state's Permanent Mineral Trust Fund and the budget reserve account to get the 42-mile long second Madison pipeline off the ground. The city will pay back \$5.5 million, or one-third, under a state formula for water projects.

If it passes both the Senate and the House, the money to begin the project will be available July 1, Evenson said.

The bill also sets up a financing mechanism for the entire \$226 million cost of the project.

The Madison pipeline bill is up for a second reading at the Senate on Tuesday morning.