

UPDATE

SCDOT Relocation Bill

April 10, 2018



Shared with SCRWA by Charlie Gray
(*Chesterfield County Rural Water Co.*)

Our Senate Relocation Bill, S.932, which had passed the Senate on March 29, was introduced in the House on Tuesday. Having done so, the bill made the crossover deadline and we have until the end of the session to get it across the goal line.

With the House focused last week on moving House bills ahead of the crossover deadline, House Speaker Lucas asked that H.3739 (the House version of our bill) be set aside to allow additional time on other House bills. Lucas feared that debate on H.3739 could become bogged down due to amendments aimed at reducing the number of public utilities eligible for relocation funding. While we would have preferred to debate the House bill and its amendments, it would have been unwise to not honor the request from the Speaker.

S.932 is now in the House Education and Public Works Committee which is the same panel that originally voted 15-0 to approve H.3739. The Transportation Subcommittee will consider the Senate version once again. We do not know if amendments will be submitted at the subcommittee level or when the bill is debated on the House floor. We do know, however, that amendments are likely on the way.

We have not seen the actual amendments, but believe that their purpose will be to reduce the annual fiscal impact that these relocations will have on the Highway Fund, the account where motor fuel taxes are deposited. One amendment will utilize a "means test" to determine which utilities receive relocation funding. This means that DOT relocation funding will be limited to utilities that can't afford to pay for the relocation.

A second amendment is expected to have DOT only relocate the line in question at DOT cost, one time. Future relocations of that line are at the utility's cost and must be out of the DOT ROW.

There may be other amendments including one to exclude non-profit public water providers.

Our hope is to maintain a clean bill without any changes. So if you have not contacted your House members about relocation, now is the time to do so. We have less than five weeks remaining before the end of the session.

It should be noted that the cumulative total of South Carolinians represented by our three professional organizations (SCRWA, SCAWWA, and SCWQA) supporting this bill, is over 3.0 million people. We've been working on getting this legislation approved for over 5 years. We now have SC DOT's total concurrence with the bill. Yet, with all of this support and cooperation, we continue to struggle in an uphill battle to get it passed. The hold-up lies with only one or two elected officials. Your continued support is needed as we pursue this common sense and much needed legislation.