
Grant a good start for Syracuse water pipe repairs, but there's more to do (Editorial)



By **Editorial Board**

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Syracuse has 550 miles of aging water pipes that Mayor Stephanie Miner has estimated will take \$726 million to repair.

Miner and Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli announced Wednesday that Syracuse will receive a **\$10 million grant** from the state Assembly toward water repairs. The grant is a small but meaningful step on the road to fixing the city's pipes and building its future.

The mayor intends to use the \$10 million grant to prime the pump for more federal and state grant money, and to borrow money from Wall Street, to make a bigger dent in the problem. Handled correctly, the grant could bloom into millions of dollars more for repairs.

Miner sees infrastructure repairs as necessary to the city's ability to keep and attract jobs. And she has only to look at the drought in the Western states to make her point. In the future, desirable cities for economic development will be those with abundant, clean water supplies.

WATER MAIN BREAKS

Some \$800,000 of the grant will be spent on planning for the repairs and researching innovative ways to look for weaknesses in the pipes and make repairs before they break. The mayor's Innovation Team is at work on a comprehensive, long-term infrastructure plan. We eagerly await the plan's arrival, possibly by fall.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo told the city to find a way to fix its own pipes, without the state's help. It turns out the state can help Syracuse pay for its infrastructure repairs, after all.

The \$10 million grant comes from the State and Municipal Facility Program, a three-year-old, \$1.1 billion state fund dedicated to public projects. The fund is controlled by the governor, the Senate majority leader and the Assembly speaker. They dole out borrowed money with little or no transparency. Who else is getting the money? What are the criteria? Who decides which projects will be funded? It's all a bit of a mystery.

While we quibble with the source of the funding, the state has a role in helping municipalities with their infrastructure needs. Ten million dollars is a drop in the ocean for Syracuse. Yes, it's a start. But it's not enough, and everyone knows it.

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