

PROJECT SUMMARY

The existing Riverview District sanitary sewer system beneath West 7th Street was originally constructed and hand-carved through sandstone rock in the late 1800s and transports sanitary waste to the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services Treatment Plant. The sanitary sewer system consists of

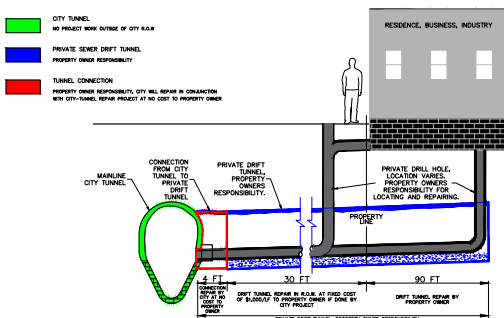
- 4.5-miles of tunnels, ranging to depths of 30-100 feet,
- 1.5-miles of pipes,
- 46 access manholes to pipe sewers
- 60 shafts to tunnel sewers, and
- 301 individual household/business-owned sewer lateral connections.

These old systems are failing and need immediate repair.

PROPOSED PROJECT SCOPE

This multifaceted and multi-year sanitary sewer system project will inspect and modernize critical public infrastructure, upgrading, repairing, rehabilitating, and replacing century old sanitary mains and tunnels. This work needs to be completed in advance of the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s proposed roadway reconstruction of Trunk Highway 5/West 7th Street.

In addition to ensuring a safe and reliable sanitary sewer system, the critical work would avoid potentially dangerous and costly sanitary sewer collapses, like the one that occurred on West 7th Street in 2025. This project also benefits abutting private properties, who face extremely high sewer repairs on their private lines/tunnels, which are 3 to 5 times more expensive in this corridor because of the geology and age of the system.



Emergency Sanitary Sewer Tunnel Repairs Diagram

\$60 M FOR CITY/PUBLIC MAIN TUNNELS

(\$10 M funded by Saint Paul Sewer Utility)

+\$30 M FOR PRIVATE SANITARY SEWER DRIFTS AND CONNECTIONS

=\$90 M ESTIMATED TOTAL PROJECT COSTS

Funding Requested:
\$80 million



West 7th Street (State Trunk Highway 5) Riverview District in Saint Paul is a historic, bustling corridor connecting downtown to Fort Snelling and the Minneapolis–St. Paul International Airport. This more than 5-mile multimodal roadway is one of the busiest arterials and transitways in Saint Paul with more than 30,000 vehicles per day, and features many businesses, restaurants, and shops, along with residential properties.



Aging Sewer System Needs Funding

Saint Paul’s sewer utilities along West 7th Street are some of the oldest sanitary sewers in the city. They need significant and urgent financial support.



High Repair Costs Burden Property Owners

Private drift tunnels are the responsibility of property owners, yet they are extremely expensive, often cost-prohibitive, to repair. The cost burden could be \$150,000–\$200,000 per property. State funding could help reduce the cost for these critical infrastructure repairs.



Challenging Geology Increases Repair Costs

The unique geology of the area with sandrock and age of the infrastructure, combined with the significant depth of the tunnels makes repairs much more complex and significantly more expensive than similar work in other parts of the city.



Tunnels Connect Properties to Deep Sewers

Properties in the area own drill holes and “drift tunnels” that are cut through the sandrock to reach the 30–100 feet deep city-owned tunnels. Drift tunnels are horizontally mined passages constructed to carry piped sewer lateral services from private property to the city-owned tunnel.



2025 Collapse Highlights Critical Failures

The sewer tunnel collapse that occurred in 2025, demonstrated the dangerous result of broken private drift connections. The overall condition of many private drift tunnel connections along this corridor are critical. It is estimated more than 80 miles of drift tunnels are broken or failing.

