



**Candice S. Miller**

Public Works Commissioner  
Macomb County

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**‘We cannot afford another sinkhole’**

*Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice Miller announces major sewer rehabilitation project*

To eliminate the risk of another sewer collapse and sinkhole like the one that occurred in 2016 in the city of Fraser, the next phase of a major infrastructure project is scheduled to begin this summer, Macomb Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller announced Thursday.

The rehabilitation of a section of the Macomb Interceptor sewer is a necessary project and will take place at 15 Mile and Garfield roads.

“We must invest in and maintain our underground infrastructure. We cannot afford another sinkhole or sewer collapse. These repairs will take us into the next generation and beyond,” Miller said.

The Macomb Interceptor carries the sewage flushed by more than 600,000 people in the 11 communities that comprise the Macomb Interceptor Drain Drainage District.

The upcoming rehabilitation project in the area of the Interceptor known as “Segment 6” will include the lining of approximately 2,100 feet of the 5-foot diameter pipe along 15 Mile, east of Garfield, plus a new access shaft at the eastern end of the project. That will be followed by the lining of a 1,200-foot curved portion of the 11-foot diameter interceptor at the intersection. Additionally, an “air jumper” will be installed and connected to the existing bio-filter on 15 Mile to help alleviate odors that have been prevalent in the area for many years.

Segment 6 rehabilitation is tentatively scheduled to begin in late summer 2021 and be completed by spring 2023. Periodic lanes closures are expected along 15 Mile and Garfield roads but traffic will be maintained.

The MIDD board voted unanimously on April 12 to award the rehabilitation project to Ric-Man Construction of Sterling Heights, for \$13,541,545.

“Among the three companies that bid on this project, I’m delighted that the lowest and qualified bid was from a local firm and at a significantly lower amount than engineering estimates,” said Miller, who chairs the board.

In addition to protecting the sewer system for decades, the additional good news for ratepayers is that no increase in sewer rates is expected with Segment 6.

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The need for critical infrastructure investment is evidenced by the sinkhole that occurred on 15 Mile near Eberlein Drive, between Utica and Hayes roads, on Christmas Eve 2016. Caused by the collapse of a section of the massive sewer 65 feet below the surface, it was one of the worst infrastructure disasters in Michigan history and forced the evacuation of 23 homes, including three that were condemned, two of which were eventually demolished.

Commissioner Miller took office Jan. 1, 2017 and oversaw the excavation of a trench on 15 Mile Road that was the size of a football field, and the installation of a new, 11-foot diameter sewer line. The project was completed in less than 12 months at a cost of \$75 million -- faster and at much less cost than some observers had estimated -- and without a single safety incident.

Miller ordered inspections of other parts of the Interceptor. It revealed significant corrosion of stretches that have reinforced concrete pipe, including exposure of steel rods. Extensive grouting was completed in the sewer beneath 15 Mile. Last fall, the first major rehabilitation project was started on the Macomb Interceptor's Segment 5, near Schoenherr Road. Construction contractors continue to dig a massive shaft in the ITC corridor that will reach a depth of 65 feet where workers will enter the massive sewer and install glass fiber polymer pipe to 7,000 lineal feet of unreinforced concrete. Heading east from there, 1,300 lineal feet of 8-foot diameter pipe will be spray-lined with a geo-polymer coating. Segment 5 is expected to be completed in mid-2022.

Proceeds from the \$12.5 million sinkhole lawsuit settlement paid to the MIDD in November 2020 by the insurance company for three contractors whose mistakes while working in the Oakland-Macomb Interceptor to the west caused conditions that eventually led to the sinkhole, greatly reduced the amount of necessary funds that were budgeted for Segment 5. That has allowed some money initially allocated for Segment 5 to be earmarked for Segment 6. In addition, the Public Works Office is working with partners at the local, state and federal levels for funding for this project to benefit the ratepayers.

The 11 communities in the MIDD include Fraser, Sterling Heights, Utica, New Haven and Clinton, Chesterfield, Harrison, Macomb, Lenox, Shelby and Washington townships.

"This type of rehab work is very important. Underground infrastructure may be out of sight to many folks but it can't be out of mind," Miller said. "It's like performing critical preventive maintenance on your home in order to avoid major problems."

In a related move, a contract was awarded last December for the inspection of 26 miles of pipe and 363 manholes that are under the Macomb County Public Works Office's jurisdiction. It's the largest infrastructure program in county history.

*VIDEO:* Macomb County Public Works Commissioner Candice S. Miller discusses the upcoming Segment 6 sanitary sewer rehabilitation project. <https://youtu.be/P20eBEYQ4QQ>

*PHOTOS:*

A sanitary sewage meter on Garfield Road, just south of 15 Mile Road, in Fraser.

Areas in red are part of the upcoming Segment 6 sewer rehabilitation project within the Macomb Interceptor sewer system. Work is tentatively scheduled to begin in late summer.

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