

Town of Alpine

Utility Billing Process, Costs, and Platform Overview

Statement of Purpose

At the request of the Town Clerk this information was prepared to provide background and cost data related to a potential requirement that Town of Alpine is considering to require all utility customers to utilize paperless billing.

The purpose of this information is to outline the current utility billing process, associated costs, operational impacts, and customer considerations, including accessibility and customer preference, in order to support informed discussion and decision-making.

This information is presented for review only and does not constitute a recommendation or policy proposal.

Current Billing Volume & Direct Costs

- Printed Utility Bills: Approximately 796 printed cards per month
- Monthly Postage Cost: Approximately \$493.52
- Estimated Annual Postage Cost: Approximately \$5,922.24
- Printed Card Supply Cost:
 - ❖ Most recent order totaled \$725.43 for 3,500 billing cards
 - ❖ This equates to approximately \$0.21 per card, excluding postage
- Staff Time for Billing:
 - ❖ Approximately 6 staff hours per billing cycle
 - ❖ Time includes bill preparation, system processing, coordination of printing and mailing.
 - ❖ This estimate does not include additional time related to corrections, returned mail, delinquency follow-up, or payment issue resolution

Current Billing Platform

Xpress Bill Pay

The Town of Alpine currently utilizes Xpress Bill Pay, a specialized, secure, web-based and mobile payment platform designed for municipal billing, including water and utility services.

Xpress Bill Pay allows customers to:

- View their utility bills online
- Make one-time or recurring payments
- Manage payment methods and billing preferences

Customers typically access the platform by locating their billing organization (Town of Alpine) on the Xpress Bill Pay website or mobile application and creating an account.

Key Features of Xpress Bill Pay

Convenience:

- Bills can be accessed and paid 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via web or mobile application

Payment Options:

- Credit cards
- Debit cards
- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT / ACH)

Automatic Payments (AutoPay):

- Customers may enroll in recurring automatic payments
- Electronic Notifications:
- Email notifications when bills are issued, due, or paid

Security:

- Uses industry-standard, bank-level security technologies to protect customer and payment data

Operational Observations

- The Town currently has more customers enrolled in AutoPay than enrolled in paperless billing.
- Enrollment in AutoPay does not automatically enroll customers in paperless billing, and many customers who pay electronically still choose to receive paper bills.
- The continued receipt of mailed bills by AutoPay customers appears to be a personal preference and not a technical limitation of the billing platform.
- Despite the availability of electronic billing and payment options, a significant portion of customers continue to receive printed utility bills, resulting in ongoing postage, printing, and material costs.

Customers Unable to Receive Electronic Notifications

While electronic billing and notifications offer operational efficiencies, it is recognized that not all utility customers are able to receive or reliably access electronic communications.

Some customers may:

- Lack consistent access to internet service or mobile devices
- Do not use email or smartphone technology
- Experience accessibility challenges related to age, disability, or technology literacy
- Live in areas with limited or unreliable connectivity

- Prefer or require paper billing for recordkeeping or personal financial management

For these customers, printed utility bills remain a necessary and essential service to ensure:

- Continued access to billing information
- Timely notice of charges and due dates
- Fair and equitable service to all residents and account holders
- Alignment with reasonable accommodation and accessibility considerations

Any future consideration of expanded electronic billing or reduced mailed notices should include:

- Continued availability of paper billing for those unable or unwilling to transition
- Opt-in or opt-out flexibility based on customer preference
- Adequate customer education

Summary

The Town of Alpine's current utility billing process includes:

- Approximately 796 mailed utility bills per month
- 493.52 per month in postage costs
- Ongoing printed card supply costs (See appendix A)
- An estimated 6 staff hours per monthly billing cycle (See appendix A)
- Use of a modern, secure online billing platform capable of supporting electronic payments, AutoPay, and paperless billing
- Recognition that many customers actively choose to remain on paper billing, even when enrolled in electronic payment options

Appendix A

True Per-Bill Cost Estimate

(Postage + Card Stock + Staff Time)

Known Costs & Assumptions

- Bills mailed per month: 796
- Monthly postage: \$493.52
- Printed card cost:
 - ❖ $\$725.43 \div 3,500 \text{ cards} = \0.21 per card
- Staff time:
 - ❖ Approximately 6 hours per billing cycle
- Staff hourly rate: \$50
 - Presented below as a variable so council can apply the appropriate wage + benefits rate
 - Cost Breakdown (Excluding Staff Time)

Cost Breakdown (Excluding Staff Time)

Cost Component	Monthly Cost	Cost Per Bill
Postage	\$493.52	\$0.62
Printed billing card	\$167.16	\$0.21
Subtotal (materials + postage)	\$660.68	\$0.83

Staff Time Cost (Variable)

Item	Calculation
Staff hours per cycle	6 hours
Hourly rate	\$ 50

Item	Calculation
Monthly staff cost	6×50
Staff cost per bill	$300 \div 796 = .38$

Estimated Total Cost Per Mailed Bill

Scenario	Cost Per Bill
Materials + postage only	\$0.83
Including staff time (example \$50/hr.)	\$.38
Total per Bill	\$ 1.21

Visual Cost Breakdown

Category	Monthly Cost	Annualized Cost
Postage	\$493.52	\$5,922.24
Printed billing cards	167.16	\$2,005.92
Total (excluding staff)	\$660.68	\$7,928.16

Staff costs are intentionally shown separately to allow council to apply the correct wage and benefit rate.

Per-Bill Cost Summary (At a Glance)

Cost Element	Per Bill
Postage	\$0.62
Card stock	\$0.21
Staff time	.38
Total per mailed bill	\$1.21

Appendix B

Policy-Neutral Options for Future Consideration

The following options are presented solely to outline possible paths forward. No option is recommended or endorsed.

Option 1: Maintain Current Billing Structure (Status Quo)

- Continue mailing printed utility bills to all customers
- Maintain current AutoPay and paperless enrollment processes
- No change to customer experience or billing operations

Impacts:

- Predictable costs
- Continued postage, printing, and staff workload
- No transition or outreach required

Option 2: Customer Education Only

- Improve communication clarifying the difference between:
 - AutoPay enrollment
 - Paperless billing enrollment
- No changes to defaults or requirements

Impacts:

- Preserves customer choice
- May increase voluntary paperless adoption
- Minimal operational disruption

Option 3: Voluntary Paperless Incentives

- Encourage paperless billing through non-mandatory methods
- Maintain full access to paper billing for those who prefer or require it

Impacts:

- Potential reduction in mailed bills
- Retains opt-in flexibility
- Requires communication and tracking

Option 4: Default Paperless with Opt-Out

- New accounts default to paperless billing
- Customers may opt out and continue receiving paper bills

Impacts:

- May reduce long-term mailing volume
- Requires clear notice and exemptions
- Continued accommodation for customers unable to receive electronic notices

Option 5: Tiered Billing Approach

- Different billing methods based on customer preference or eligibility
- Paper billing remains available where needed

Impacts:

- Balances efficiency and accessibility
- Additional administrative oversight
- Requires clear policies and customer communication