



## Staff Report – Consent Agenda

February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 Council Regular Meeting

Construction Award for Advanced Meter Infrastructure (Submitted by Rob Charles, Utilities Manager)

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**BACKGROUND:** The City's water utility serves customers using radio-read water meters that allow readings to be collected without manually accessing each meter. However, the system still requires field staff to physically drive throughout the City each month to collect usage data. During each billing cycle, approximately two water operations employees spend one full week performing initial meter reads and follow-up re-reads using handheld data collectors that receive meter information through short-range wireless communication.

Under the current process, customer usage data is typically available only once per billing cycle, limiting the City's ability to quickly identify abnormal usage or assist customers with timely consumption information. Activities such as move in/out reads, leak investigations, abnormal usage review, and customer billing inquiries also require staff coordination rather than automated system reads.

As the City grows and additional meters are added, the time required for monthly drive-by reading increases, making the current process less scalable over time. Many utilities have transitioned from mobile drive-by reading systems (AMR) to fixed Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) networks as part of normal modernization of water utility operations. Customers increasingly expect timely access to usage information, similar to other utilities that provide online consumption data.

The City's existing Neptune meters are compatible with fixed AMI technology that would allow meter readings to be transmitted automatically to a central system on an ongoing basis, eliminating the need for monthly drive-by collection. While this infrastructure has been available, it has not previously been implemented due to cost.

**SUMMARY:** Core & Main, the City's existing supplier for Neptune water meters, has proposed installation of a fixed AMI network consisting of pole-mounted data collectors throughout the City. These collectors will automatically receive meter readings and transmit data via a secure cellular communication network to a central system, transitioning the City from a mobile drive-by meter reading system to a fixed network that provides ongoing, near real-time usage data.

Implementation of this system will eliminate the need for monthly citywide drive-by meter collection, improve operational efficiency within the Water Division, and provide faster access to usage information for billing and customer service purposes. Meter data will be available directly through the system rather than requiring field collection, improving response time for billing inquiries and abnormal usage concerns.

Because the City's existing meters and radio transmitters are Neptune brand, the fixed network collectors and communication equipment must be fully compatible with the proprietary Neptune meter communication system. The proposed equipment expands and integrates with the City's existing Neptune infrastructure rather than replacing it. Core & Main is the exclusive authorized provider of Neptune meter equipment and system integration services in Oregon and Washington. Staff has determined this to be a sole source procurement under RCW 39.26.140, as the system components must match and function with the City's existing proprietary meter technology, and replacement of the current platform would require systemwide meter replacement at substantially higher cost.



**Figure 1: Example of Utility Poles with Data Collectors**

# R900® Gateway v4 Fixed Network Data Collector



**Figure 1: Neptune R900 Data Collector**

**BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY:** This project will provide customers with near real-time access to their water usage information rather than waiting for monthly meter reads. Earlier visibility of consumption data supports faster identification of leaks or abnormal water use, which can help reduce water loss and prevent unexpectedly high bills. The system also improves billing accuracy and allows the City to respond more quickly to customer questions about usage. Overall, this project modernizes the City's water utility infrastructure to provide more reliable, efficient, and responsive service to the community.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:** This work aligns with the Strategic Plan Goal of Stewardship of City Assets.

**POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** There may be gaps in service based that may require additional data collectors. At this time the communication model shows that there will be 100% communication between data collectors and meters.

**BUDGET IMPACT:** The cost to install the AMI pole mounted data collectors and associated equipment is \$316,591. The project is funded through the water fund.

**Budget:**

Mobile Data Collectors Project (2026 Capital Budget)	\$300,000
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**Expenses:**

Core & Main – AMI Equipment & Install	\$316,591
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The difference between the 2026 capital budget allocation and the project cost will be covered within the Water Fund capital program and reflected in a future budget adjustment through the Spring Omnibus process.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff would recommend Council approve this contract.