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Hot Topic: Public Chapter 779 Water and Sewer Rate Study

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August 14, 2008

PUBLIC CHAPTER 779 WATER AND SEWER RATE STUDY

Randy Gustafson, Research Consultant

During the recent legislative session, the 105th General Assembly debated the issue of inside versus outside water and wastewater service rates and tap fees. The result of the debate was Public Chapter 779, which mandates “a study of all water and sewer rates set by a municipality providing water or sewer, or both, to customers inside the municipal jurisdictional boundaries as well as customers outside the municipal jurisdictional boundaries.” The legislation ordered the Water and Wastewater Funding Board, housed within the comptroller’s Division of Local Finance, to conduct the study to determine differences in rates and tap fees between inside and outside customers.

The Water and Wastewater Funding Board has enlisted the aid of MTAS to conduct the survey on its behalf. Public Chapter 779

declares that the “study shall at a minimum focus on the water rates, sewer rates, and tap fees charged to those customers inside the municipal boundaries as well as customers outside the municipal jurisdictional boundaries.” The MTAS survey will follow the format of the municipal utility rate survey last conducted in 2003.

While the focus of the survey is water and wastewater issues, it will cover sanitation and recycling efforts as well. Cities also will have the option of submitting their rate and tap fee schedules via phone – (865) 974-0411, fax (865) 974-0423, or e-mail (murts@tennessee.edu). Survey results will be presented to the Water and Wastewater Funding Board as well as made available to all cities through KnowledgeBase on the MTAS Web site.

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