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## EPA: US needs \$300B in sewer, water work

 By MICHAEL GORMLEY | Associated Press – Wed, Feb 8, 2012

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A federal study shows municipalities nationwide need more than \$300 billion worth of essential upgrades to long overlooked water and sewer systems over the next 20 years.

The need is acute in Northeastern states with older systems like New York, which needs \$29.7 billion worth of improvements, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer said Wednesday. But he said that price is a "just a drop in the bucket" compared to the higher cost of continuing to upgrade parts of sewer and water systems when emergencies strike. He is pushing a bill that would counter planned funding cuts in the federal transportation bill now being negotiated in Washington.

"EPA found that the nation's 53,000 community water systems and 21,400 not-for-profit, non-community water systems will need to invest an estimated \$334.8 billion between 2007 and 2027," stated the federal Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment, which is updated every four years.

The National Association of Counties' 2008 report estimated the need for water and sewer upgrades at \$300 billion to \$450 billion nationwide and the federal stimulus project provided just a fraction of that as the recession reduced local governments' revenues.

"This is a very serious concern," said Carolyn Berndt of the National League of Cities. "Many communities have a long-term plan to replace all their underground water infrastructure, but even if they do a couple percentages of pipes a year, it's still going to take over 100 years for some of them to replace it all."

She said local governments have been paying more than 95 percent of the cost of water and sewer upgrades since the 1990s as federal aid has declined. Schumer said federal aid covered 75 percent of local costs in the 1980s and 1970s.

"It's a huge undertaking," Berndt said. "Some of these pipes are 100 years old. That's why they continue to see water main breaks."

The group supports Schumer's effort, which comes as Congress works to cut spending.