LOUISVILLE, KY - Bumblebee—MSD’s Waterway Protection Tunnel boring machine—has reached the halfway mark in her quest to carve a 4-mile waterway protection tunnel through bedrock eighteen stories under Louisville. Nicknamed “Bumblebee” in honor of Muhammad Ali, the 412-foot long machine is currently under the area of North Wenzel and Geiger streets. Soon, she will turn southeast and head toward Lexington Road and Grinstead Drive, which is her final destination point.

How does Bumblebee work?
As the boring machine excavates the tunnel route, crews install locomotive tracks behind the machine to transport workers and supplies. A conveyor system transports the excavated rock through the tunnel to the working shaft. There it rides a vertical conveyor to the surface. The rock is then loaded into dump trucks and transported to a local quarry.

After the excavation is complete, the entire length of the tunnel is lined in concrete, making it watertight. The Waterway Protection Tunnel will store up to 55 million gallons of combined wastewater and stormwater during periods of heavy rain until capacity is available in the MSD sewer system. The contents are then pumped back into the system, conveyed to MSD’s Morris Forman Water Quality Treatment Center for proper treatment, and later released into the Ohio River.

“Tunnel boring projects are wonders of engineering and technology, and we are excited to bring this innovative solution to Louisville to help create safe and clean waterways,” said MSD Executive Director Tony Parrott.

REMINDER: Your organization may have b-roll from the December 5, 2019 media visit inside MSD’s Waterway Protection Tunnel

Want to learn more?
Keep track of Bumblebee and get more information at https://louisvillemsd.org/tunnel

For an animation of the tunnel, click here https://youtu.be/u9CHHpB5xek