

# Updating MnDOT's Utility Accommodation Policy

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2012 AASHTO Subcommittee on Right of Way and Utilities Conference

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# Updating MnDOT's Utility Accommodation Policy

- Existing Utility Accommodation Policy (UAP)
  - Written in 2005
  - Replaced previous version written in early 90's

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# Updating MnDOT's Utility Accommodation Policy

- Why change the UAP so soon?
  - 2009 FHWA Memorandum
  - New technologies and trends
  - Renewable Energy
  - Overall Service to the Public
  - Gaps Found
  - Not limited to above/Look at entire UAP

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# Initiatives in Minnesota

- CapX 2020
  - Ensuring electric reliability in Minnesota and the surrounding region
  - 5 current projects
  - Other smaller ones in the future
- Wind Energy

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# Utilization of Highway ROW for Public Utilities Project

- Phases of Project
  - National Scan
  - Minnesota Stakeholder Involvement and Feedback
  - Identifying Major Themes and Issues
  - Risk Management

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# Utilization of Highway ROW for Public Utilities Project

- Phases of Project (Con't)
  - Opportunities for Improvement
  - Deliver rewritten UAP and other related documents
  - Implementation Plan
  - Training and Education

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# National Scan on Utility Accommodation

- Survey conducted- 60 questions, 39 respondents, and topic specific follow-up
- Utility Accommodation in Interstate/Freeway ROW
- Accommodation of high-voltage electric transmission

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# National Scan on Utility Accommodation

- Resource Sharing
- Utility Corridors
- Changes due to renewable energy needs, new technologies, or needs of the public
- Innovative activities
- Best Practices/Problematic Issues

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# Highlights of Scan on Key Issues

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# Utility Accommodation along Freeways

- 16 of 39 respondents replied that they allowed longitudinal accommodation
  - Overhead Electric- 6
  - Buried Electric- 9
  - Gas/Pipeline- 7
  - Overhead Communications- 7
  - Buried Communications- 16
  - Water- 8
  - Sewer- 7

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# Utility Accommodation along Freeways

- Monetary benefits
- Non-monetary benefits
- Monetary risks
- Non-monetary risks

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# Overhead Electric Transmission along Freeways

- 6 of 39 states replied that they allowed longitudinal accommodation
- 2 others had passed or were looking at legislation to allow accommodation
- Recent Florida Legislation

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# New Technologies, Renewable Energy & Public Needs

- 17 of 39 respondents responded positively that they had or are considering changes
- However, most states were just starting to explore the issues
- Texas - renewable energy
- Challenge to keep up with technology

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# Problematic Accommodation Issues

- LIMITED SPACE!
- Utilities not following permit provisions; lack of resources to inspect installations
- Interpretation of a permit as an easement by utilities
- Public and private difficult to determine

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# Other Data of Interest

- States with resource sharing- 19
- State contemplating action to contain proliferation of utility facilities- 13
- States that acquire ROW for utility relocations due to highway work- 22
- States that establish utility corridors with ROW- 12

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Thanks to those who  
responded!

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# Stakeholder Involvement and Feedback

- External Stakeholders
  - Focus Groups
  - Interviews
- Internal Stakeholders
  - Project Groups
  - District Permits Staff

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# Issues from External Stakeholders

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# UAP Awareness and Use

- Awareness and usage levels are low
- Extra work for MnDOT staff
- Increased awareness = earlier compliance and improved utility coordination

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# UAP Awareness and Use

- Clarity
- UAP Links to Permits
- Industry specific documents
- Training and outreach
- Enhance web presence

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# Overcrowding and Use of ROW

- Continuing growth of utilities in ROW, particularly fiber
- Space for new utilities to go
- Space for existing utilities to be maintained
- Damage prevention concerns
- Not just limited to underground

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# Overcrowding and Use of ROW

- Spatial control/prioritization
- Utility corridors/greater accommodation
- Encourage joint use/trenching
- One trench per utility owner

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# Overcrowding and Use of ROW

- Denial of permit applications
- Placement of conduits during construction by MnDOT and space sold to utilities
- What is DOT role in managing ROW?

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# Electric Transmission Lines

- Current Accommodation- perception versus reality
- Blowout
- HVTL Research Project
  - Safety of workers on ROW
  - Safety of the Traveling Public

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# Permit Process

- Turnaround Time
- Increase in the number of permit applications
- Decrease in the quality of permit applications
- Government shutdown

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# Permit Process

- Online Permits
- Blanket/Annual Maintenance Permit
- Green initiative
- Review of Plan Sheets

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# Consistent Application of UAP

- Between Districts
- Between different people
- Perception versus reality
- Training and education

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# Industry Standard Updates

- Few updates were considered to be needed
- Trenchless Technology/Construction
- Pipeline Integrity Requirements
- Clarification of existing UAP language
- Infiltration Trenches and Tree Trenches

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# Continued Stakeholder Involvement

- Majority of utility owners interested
- Project and non-project specific functions
- Enhancement of currently available tools
- Statewide Utility Coordinating Committee

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# Importance of Coordination

- Focus Groups/Interview questions related to accommodation
- Discussion of project coordination still often raised
- Very complimentary of MnDOT staff and “new” process
- Looking for continued improvement/communications

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# Issues from Internal Stakeholders

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# Permit Fees

- MnDOT prohibited from charging permit fees to recoup costs
- Minnesota municipalities can charge fees
- Fees = quicker service and online system
- Fee structure types
- Acceptance of fees - internal and external

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# “Fuzzy Areas”

- Public versus private lines
- Distribution versus service lines
- Generation facilities

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# Site Properties

- Rest Areas
- Weigh Stations
- Gravel Pits
- Truck Stations
- Maintenance Shops
- ROW versus non-ROW facilities

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# Other Issues

- Various permit types - usage and language
- Scenic easements
- X,Y,Z coordinates for new installations
- Accommodation on local federal-aid projects, Federal Lands, and within sovereign nations

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# Other Issues

- Highways identified as future freeways
- Accommodation of drainage
- Utility owners' (lack of) understanding of clear zone

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# Overall Issues

- We have identified and are in the process of addressing 29 different issues with regards to utility accommodation.

WAIT! What is it we are doing again?



# Risk Management

- Categorizing risk for each issue
- Process for Reviewing Risk
- Selecting a risk management team(s)

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# Training and Education

- Various audiences
- On changes and on utility accommodation in general
- Utility Coordination Training
- Ongoing education

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# Thank You!

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