Updating MnDOT’s Utility Accommodation Policy

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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
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
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
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
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
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
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
Highlights of Scan on Key Issues
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
Utility Accommodation along Freeways

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

- 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.
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
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
Thanks to those who responded!
Stakeholder Involvement and Feedback

• External Stakeholders
  – Focus Groups
  – Interviews

• Internal Stakeholders
  – Project Groups
  – District Permits Staff
Issues from External Stakeholders
UAP Awareness and Use

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

- Clarity
- UAP Links to Permits
- Industry specific documents
- Training and outreach
- Enhance web presence
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
Overcrowding and Use of ROW

• Spatial control/prioritization
• Utility corridors/greater accommodation
• Encourage joint use/trenching
• One trench per utility owner
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?
Electric Transmission Lines

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

• Turnaround Time
• Increase in the number of permit applications
• Decrease in the quality of permit applications
• Government shutdown
Permit Process

• Online Permits
• Blanket/Annual Maintenance Permit
• Green initiative
• Review of Plan Sheets
Consistent Application of UAP

• Between Districts
• Between different people
• Perception versus reality
• Training and education
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
Continued Stakeholder Involvement

• Majority of utility owners interested
• Project and non-project specific functions
• Enhancement of currently available tools
• Statewide Utility Coordinating Committee
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
Issues from Internal Stakeholders
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
“Fuzzy Areas”

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

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

- Highways identified as future freeways
- Accommodation of drainage
- Utility owners’ (lack of) understanding of clear zone
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)
Training and Education

• Various audiences
• On changes and on utility accommodation in general
• Utility Coordination Training
• Ongoing education
Thank You!