Washington State Department of Transportation

Memorandum

October 20, 2023

TO: WSDOT Project Development Engineers

FROM: Mark Gaines, Development Division Director, State Design Engineer *mg*

SUBJECT: Project Delivery Memo #23-04 – Dig Once - Broadband

Purpose

The purpose of this Project Delivery Memo is to provide new policy regarding federal requirements for coordinating the installation of broadband infrastructure concurrently with WSDOT project delivery (i.e., 'dig once'). This memo applies to all WSDOT projects included in the Project Delivery Plan regardless of procurement method.

Background

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the State of Washington recognizes it is in the public interest for utility facilities to jointly use the public right of way when such use does not adversely affect the highway or the traveling public. The rapid deployment of broadband facilities is critical as it has been deemed a vital part of the state's infrastructure. All broadband infrastructure installed on the highway right of way must still adhere to the WSDOT Utilities Accommodation Policy.

The Code of Federal Regulations 23.645 was revised to add broadband infrastructure deployment. State departments of transportation must now advertise upcoming highway projects to broadband companies who may wish to install broadband infrastructure concurrently with highway project construction. Dig once offers opportunities for reducing costs for broadband companies and avoiding repeated excavation within the highway right of way without affecting the ownership, operation, and maintenance of the broadband infrastructure, or causing additional responsibility for WSDOT.

Direction

The following procedure shall be followed when a broadband company expresses interest in participating in a dig once process during a WSDOT project:

1. The Utilities, Railroad and Agreements Office's Broadband Utility Coordinator will direct inquiries from broadband utilities to the applicable Project Engineer's Office and Region Utilities Office

2. The Project Engineer's Office shall assess the feasibility of incorporating a dig once process for broadband into their project
3. If dig once is feasible, the Project Engineer's Office will include the work into other utility coordination efforts with the Region Utilities Office

Regional Program Management staff will be notified by the Broadband Utility Coordinator if a Project Engineer's Office has not been established and will note the inquiry in the Transportation Executive Information System.

WSDOT project delivery must not be delayed or unnecessarily burdened by these coordination efforts. It is recognized that not all WSDOT projects will be suitable for a dig once process. The criteria for determining feasibility of a dig once process includes project scope and schedule, which shall not be revised to incorporate this process. It is important to note that while WSDOT is encouraged to consider dig once opportunities, nothing in the CFR requires that WSDOT allow installation of broadband infrastructure in a highway right of way.

The Utilities Manual (M 22-87), Design Manual (M22-01) and Design-Build Manual (M 3126) will be updated to incorporate this policy.

Please direct questions to the Assistant State Utilities Manager (Broadband Utility Coordinator) in the Utilities, Railroad and Agreements Office of the Development Division.

MG: mj

cc: Regional Utility Managers
Regional Program Managers