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## Project Development Preparing the PS&E Utility Coordination and Certification Requirements

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*Agencies are required to certify proper coordination with utilities prior to construction on Federal-aid projects*



Stretching far back into our Nation's history, government agencies have permitted public utility facilities to use and occupy the rights-of-way of roads and streets. Accommodating utilities within the right of way provides a more economic and reliable delivery of public service commodities such as water, electricity, communications, and gas. This relationship between utilities and public rights of way benefits the general welfare, safety, and health of our citizens.

Today, as you prepare for the construction phase of a Federal-aid project, there is a good chance impacts to utilities will occur. If you are not prepared for these situations, utility delays can cost the project more money and have a negative impact on the schedule. In order to avoid this problem, State departments of transportation (State DOTs) and local public agencies (LPAs) are required to coordinate their projects with utility owners. We are going to discuss how such coordination can help avoid unnecessary delays or project costs and what you will need to provide to certify that the appropriate coordination has taken place.



All Federal-aid projects require the submittal of a utility certification to confirm the appropriate and adequate coordination has taken place prior to construction. This utility certification is required for all projects, including those that don't affect any utilities. The utility certification is submitted as a part of the project plans, specifications, and estimates package, otherwise known as a PS&E. The PS&E approval is a major

project milestone and must be obtained before any Federal-aid project can be authorized to be advertised for construction.

Utility delays are one of the primary reasons for increased costs and schedule delays during the construction phase of a project. As the number of utilities on a project increases, the complexity for coordinating schedules and work activities also increases. If during the design of your project you recognize the utility relocation will be complex, you should allow extra time for this coordination to take place. Proper and early coordination of utilities will help ensure a better managed project during the construction phase.



Another major consideration is that each year, accidents on construction sites lead to injury or death, reminding us that coordinating our work with the utilities is also important for safety reasons. For

example, let's say a project requires excavation in a location where an

underground gas line exists, but the construction plans either don't show it or don't show it in the correct location. This situation can be dangerous and is why most agencies across the country have laws that require everyone to locate underground utilities before they dig. What if a crane has to operate in close proximity to an overhead power line? Rather than expecting the contractor to carefully work around those power lines, perhaps taking the necessary steps to temporarily move the line will make the project safer to construct.



### Utility Coordination Strategies:

As you are developing your Federal-aid project, here are some valuable strategies that should help you avoid problems and meet the challenges of coordinating with utilities:

- Identify any potential utility facilities within or near the limits of your project and determine if construction activities will affect any of them. Communicate with each of the appropriate utility owners or operators to determine the location of the utility and potential conflicts during construction.
- Coordinate with the utility to determine if there are any special requirements during construction. This may include temporary or permanent relocations, protection of the utility during construction, or identifying specific timeframes when the utility cannot be taken out of service.
- If relocations are required, coordinate with all utilities to determine relocation schedules. If utility relocations will occur during the construction phase, include the details of the arrangements in the bid documents so bidders can consider how it may impact the overall construction schedule and take this into account when submitting their bids.
- Include the location and contact information for all utilities on the construction plans to help your contractor locate utilities and avoid potential conflicts.



After the appropriate utility coordination has occurred, the utility certification for the project must be included when you submit the project PS&E for approval. Authorization to advertise a

project for bids can only be given after the project PS&E is approved.

As part of your project's utility certification, you should include a statement to address one of three possible project circumstances:

### One of Three Circumstances Must Be Addressed:

- **No utility facilities will be affected by the project.** This is appropriate for projects that won't have an effect on any utility facilities during construction.
- **All utility work will be completed prior to the start of construction.** This is appropriate when utility work is necessary, and work will be completed prior to the start of construction.
- **Arrangements are made to have utility work undertaken during construction.** In this circumstance, you must also indicate as part of your certification that appropriate notification will be included in the bid proposal notifying all prospective bidders of any utility work that will occur concurrently with the project construction.

Remember, utility coordination and certification requirements apply to all Federal-aid construction projects. Contact the utilities office from your State DOT if you have questions regarding utility coordination or certification on your Federal-aid project. You can help prevent unnecessary delays, added costs, and unsafe situations during the construction of your Federal-aid project through early coordination with utilities.

## Additional Resources

- Information regarding utility-related topics  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/utility.cfm>
- Federal regulations that apply to all Federal-aid projects prior to authorizing construction  
<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=bfca8e76cb20fc9cc274cd227545d698&rqn=div6&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.7.23.3&idno=23>
- Utility regulations on Federal-aid projects  
<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=b5f2d371880266d86531d4c2ba7bd3eb&rqn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.7.26&idno=23>
- Guidance covering broad range of utility-related requirements  
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/utilguid/>

The content of this document is not a substitute for information obtained from State departments of transportation, appropriate FHWA Division Offices, and applicable laws. Scenarios have been simplified for emphasis and do not necessarily reflect the actual range of requirements applicable to the scenario or this topic. This document was created under contract number DTFH61-11-D-00024 by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, and is offered to the public to heighten and focus awareness of Federal-aid requirements within the local public agencies community and reinforces the importance of these necessary policies, procedures, and practices.

This companion resource is the script content for the video production of the same name.