

800.01 General

800.02 Utility Accommodation Reimbursement Policy

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The Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT's) Utilities Accommodation Policy describes the means by which the department may accommodate utility installations within the state's operating highway right of way. The general intent of the Accommodation Policy is to allow only the installation of utilities that will not interfere with the safe and continued maintenance and operation of state highways.

Conflicts with installed utilities frequently occur as highway infrastructure needs increase and WSDOT undertakes capital improvements to meet additional transportation demands. Dealing with these utility conflicts in the project delivery process often results in the expenditure of limited department resources on issues not directly related to highway improvements. In order to minimize the impact of those additional resource expenditures, WSDOT has created a reimbursement policy that defines how to recover department expenses related to utility accommodation and construction conflict resolution.

800.02 Utility Accommodation Reimbursement Policy

WSDOT will recover costs and expenses related to requests for the accommodation of new utilities within the operating highway right of way (see [110.03\(4\)](#), Reimbursable Accounts). Reimbursement will also be made by utilities for select costs incurred by the department in dealing with existing utilities authorized by permit or franchise that come into conflict with the delivery of WSDOT capital highway improvement programs (also referred to as project delivery).

(1) Utility Accommodation

Collected utility permit and franchise fees will be used to offset costs for mailing; copying; adding information to WSDOT databases; release of individual sureties; costs associated with processing and depositing of application fees; and approval or denial of applications.

WSDOT engineering costs will be recovered from the utility for the approval of applications, including engineering or other reviews by necessary WSDOT personnel and any approved modifications to the application on behalf of an applicant.

Engineering activities that may be necessary to approve the application typically include, but are not be limited to:

- Field review by maintenance and other region disciplines, as necessary.
- Engineering review of the application and supporting documentation, which must include clear zone calculations, scenic classification issues, utility facility descriptions, exhibits, variance justification, or other WSDOT requirements ([WAC 468-34-170](#)).

- Construction oversight and documentation, which may include inspection of the utility installation; travel time to and from the site; monitoring work site traffic control; oversight of installation methods and materials; and verification of as-built information.

The benefits of utility accommodation cost recovery include:

- Utility facility construction is per approved plans.
- Traffic control per the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.
- Alleviation of maintenance problems (proper cleanup and restoration of work zone).
- Accurate and timely as-builts.
- Knowledge of utility installation's completion date.
- More accurate and realistic permit and franchise application submittals.
- Improved coordination of utility accommodation proposals with respect to WSDOT operations and planned capital improvement projects.

(2) Project Delivery

The majority of WSDOT projects are impacted by existing utilities located within operating highway rights of way. The department's design process generally begins by identifying existing features within the highway right of way. This identification may include existing topography, highway design elements, drainage, and right of way boundaries, as well as known existing utilities.

WSDOT-funded preliminary engineering costs during the initial design phase of a project should include:

- Utility coordination.
- Field surveying.
- Initial highway design.
- Requesting, plotting, and evaluating as-built utility information supplied by utilities (Subsurface Utility Engineering [SUE] Quality Level D).¹
- Locating utilities in the field (SUE Quality Level C).
- Performing surface geophysical techniques (SUE Quality Level B) in urban areas where subsurface construction is anticipated.
- Scheduling and holding Project Plan Overview and Utility Relocation meetings.
- Other work (up to the point utility conflicts have been identified).

When relocation or adjustment of existing utilities becomes necessary, WSDOT will recover costs associated with addressing and accommodating those utility relocations.

¹For more information on SUE levels, see [600.10](#), Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE).

Preliminary engineering cost recovery will include:

- Charges for modifying the original design to avoid utility relocation.
- Determining the precise horizontal and vertical positions of underground utilities (SUE Quality Level A).
- Utility Relocation Plan review and approval.

Construction engineering cost recovery will include:

- Charges for construction inspection.
- Costs associated with utility relocation incorporated in WSDOT's construction contract.

Other charges, such as utility-caused contractor delays, may also be recovered.

The benefits of utility relocation and highway redesign cost recovery include:

- Better plans (submission of poor-quality plans costs utilities more).
- Better responsiveness from the industry.
- Added value to the projects by the Region Utilities Office (identifying conflicts and problems prior to contract award).
- Creation of a higher level of internal and external accountability.
- Decrease in utility-related delay cost overruns and related issues.
- Documentation of reasonable utility relocation notification efforts by WSDOT, providing the ability to pass on any utility-related delay costs to unresponsive utilities.
- Assurance that utility designs and installations on highway projects are in keeping with the Accommodation Policy and associated state and federal laws and directives.

(3) WSDOT Cost-Recovery Requirements

WSDOT will recover expenses actually incurred for both engineering and administrative services.

WSDOT will recover costs from utilities associated with the investigation and processing of application requests for accommodating utility facilities on the operating highway right of way.

WSDOT will recover costs from utility owners for expenses associated with project delivery activities directly attributable to relocation of utilities located in the operating highway right of way, including department charges necessary for:

- Modifying the highway design.
- Relocation Plan approval.
- Construction oversight and inspection.
- Utility-caused contractor delays.

(4) Region Cost-Recovery Requirements

Regions are required to establish a system to track and maintain supporting documentation for any charges billed to utilities resulting from WSDOT's cost reimbursement policy. Regions will review all charges to utilities to ensure charges are appropriate to the application and project delivery processes.

Regions will provide training to applicants (if requested) to ensure minimal delays and expenses for their utility permit or franchise processing.