

**City of Berkeley
Utility Undergrounding Subcommittee
of the
Public Works Commission**

MEETING AGENDA

Subject: Utility Undergrounding

Date: May 14, 2015, 3:30 to 5:00 pm

Location: 1326 Allston Way (Berkeley's Corporation Yard)
Ratcliff Building, Willow Conference Room

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Comments from the Public (3 minutes each speaker)
3. Discuss/Action:
 - A. Review updated response to City Council incorporating comments from the Public Works Commission's May 7, 2015 meeting.
 - B. Discuss coordination with the Transportation and Disaster and Fire Safety Commissions on the response to City Council.
4. Adjournment

An agenda packet is available for public review at the Engineering Division front desk.

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SB 343 Disclaimer:

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Acting Commission Secretary:

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Draft – May 11, 2015

CONSENT CALENDAR
July , 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Public Works Commission, Transportation Commission, and Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
Subject: City Council Referral to Develop a Comprehensive Plan for the Funding of the Undergrounding of Utility Wires on All Major and Collector Streets in Berkeley

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council approve a work plan, as attached hereto, to develop a comprehensive plan (the “Undergrounding Plan”) for the funding of the undergrounding of utility wires for all streets in Berkeley. The Undergrounding Plan would be developed in coordination with the City’s existing related plans and activities, including the City’s Resiliency Program.
2. That Council establish a Utility Undergrounding Special Commission consisting of the Public Works Commission, Transportation Commission, the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission representatives, and subject matter experts as needed to oversee the preparation of the Undergrounding Plan. The Special Commission shall be a manageable size and composed similar to for the commission that developed the Downtown Street and Open Space Plan.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Implementation of the work plan will require staff resources. It may also require consultant services to prepare the economic and funding analysis for the Undergrounding Plan. The amount is not yet determined.

CITY POLICY

Berkeley has established policies that prioritize public safety and seek to create a ready, resilient and responsive community, and an infrastructure that responds to this policy objective. In addition, the City has recently funded and begun rebuilding its decayed streets and is experimenting with using green and adaptive infrastructure.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Many types of disasters can affect Berkeley and can occur in different parts of the City. These can include an earthquake, woodland fire, gas line rupture, flooding, a railroad derailment carrying flammable crude oil, tsunamis, and other catastrophes. Above ground, aerial utility wires and equipment represent a significant risk to the community. When severed, they can cause fires and interrupt the access of emergency vehicles. Christchurch, New Zealand demonstrated the significant risk a city and its residents face with reliance on aerial utility infrastructure.

In addition, there are significant co-benefits from undergrounding utility facilities including better utility reliability, improved aesthetics and the opportunity to create appropriate street lighting. All these co-benefits work to increase public safety and the city's resilience.

There are approximately 22 miles of major roadways, 37 miles of collectors, and 157 miles of residential streets in the City. Some of the streets, in particular the major streets, have already been undergrounded. There are many more streets that need to be done. At the Public Works Commission (PWC) meetings in early 2015, citizens have attended and expressed their desire for the City to develop a long term funding plan and to consider a city-wide approach to undergrounding. Reference was made to the City of San Diego that has a CPUC approved city-wide undergrounding program.

BACKGROUND

The CPUC, in 1967, established Tariff Rule 20 for the conversion of overhead utility lines to underground. There are three levels of funding for electric lines, as follows:

- Rule 20A – ratepayers pay 100%
- Rule 20B – ratepayers pay about 20%; applicants pay about 80%
- Rule 20C – applicant pays 100%

Currently, Rule 20A funding for undergrounding utilities is not available and it will be about five years before it will be available from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The City places a priority on its ability to prepare for and recover from a natural disaster and has reviewed the role undergrounding utilities could have on enhancing the reliability of emergency access routes and reducing the hazards of fallen power lines. The issue has been addressed in the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan and the General Plan and is being considered in its Resiliency Program.

The City has been struggling for some years to establish guidelines for using the meager 20A rate payer public funds in a way that provides the greatest public benefit. The following is a chronology of previous actions:

- December 2000 – City Council requested the PWC to establish priority streets and procedures for the use of Rule 20A monies.
- November 2007 – the PWC reaffirmed that major streets are the primary emergency evacuation routes and are the priorities for undergrounding.
- May 2008 – City Council held a work session on Rule 20A utility undergrounding projects. Council requested the PWC to work with staff to develop a multi-year program to address the recommended list of streets in priority order.
- March 2009 – The PWC recommended to City Council policies for the use of Rule 20A monies and a five-year plan for undergrounding in Berkeley.

Since 2000, about \$__ million of Rule 20A and \$2.34 million of 20B funds have been spent or committed through 2014 on utility undergrounding.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposed city-wide approach to the Undergrounding Plan is based on community input at PWC meetings and upon giving the Council referral more thought. The Undergrounding Plan will include an evaluation of major roadways and collectors, which provide for emergency access during a natural disaster. It will also include an evaluation of residential streets. The city-wide approach will provide for more comprehensive planning.

Forming a Special Commission will help with the logistics of the three commissions and will expedite the overall schedule. The Council can review the need for the Task Force on an annual basis or cancel it when the Undergrounding Plan is completed.

CITY MANAGER

TBD

CONTACT PERSON

Ray Yep, Public Works Commission
Terry Roberts, Transportation Commission
Bob Flasher, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

WORK PLAN

Prepare a comprehensive plan for the funding of undergrounding utility wires on a city-wide basis in Berkeley

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this work plan is to prepare a comprehensive approach to the organizing, planning, and implementation of an Undergrounding Plan for Berkeley.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in preparing the plan shall include:

- A Special Commission of representatives from the Public Works Commission, Transportation Commission, and Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
- Staff in the Public Works Department, Finance Department, and Fire Department
- Community input
- Consultant resources, as needed, to assist with financial, economic, and funding analysis
- City Council direction and oversight

PHASED PROGRAM APPROACH

Phase 1 – Program Development

Phase 1 will develop an overall approach to the undergrounding program. The activities shall include:

- Establish project goals – focus on public safety and coordination with the city’s on-going street, sidewalk and pedestrian improvement programs. Ensure coordination among the various city infrastructure projects.
- Develop baseline information – summarize Berkeley’s status on undergrounding of utilities and estimate Rule 20A funding
- Review relevant programs – summarize the status of CPUC programs, the City of San Diego’s program, Berkeley’s resiliency program and other relevant programs
- Gather public input – hold public meetings and other methods for the public to provide input
- Establish priorities – review the priorities for major roadways, collectors, and residential streets
- Prepare preliminary cost estimate – prepare a preliminary cost estimate based on cost/mile of streets.
- Prepare scope of work – prepare a detailed work scope to prepare the comprehensive Undergrounding Plan. The work scope shall identify the effort by consultants and staff resources.
- Prepare program plan – prepare an overall plan of objectives, work activities, performance measures, and reporting schedules
- Coordinate with City Council – provide updates to Council as needed

Phase 2 – Prepare Comprehensive Funding Plan

Phase 2 will prepare the comprehensive plan for funding the undergrounding of utility wires. The activities shall include:

- Forecast availability of Rule 20A funds
- Determine alternatives for funding, including: a) using the City's long term bonding capacity to create underground conduit capacity and then require utilities lease space in it, b) increasing franchise fee surcharges as done by the City of San Diego, c) other options
- Develop the implementation priorities on major roadways, collectors, and residential streets
- Prepare a report with recommendations

Phase 3 – Program Implementation

Phase 3 will implement the recommendations.

ESTIMATED SCHEDULE

The following are estimated durations from the time City Council authorizes the subcommittee to proceed.

- Phase 1 – 6 months
- Phase 2 – 18 months
- Phase 3 – to be determined